

AFGHANISTAN YESTERDAY AND TODAY



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Official name: The Democratic Republic of Afghanistan

Area: 655,000 square kilometres

Population: 15—17 million

Ethnic compositions: Pashtun (Afghan), Hazara, Tadzhik, Uzbek, Turkmen, Nuristan, Baluch . . .

altogether some 20 nationalities. For administrative purposes the country is divided into 29 provinces.

Capital: Kabul, 750,000 inhabitants

Monetary unit: 1 Afghani = 100 poul

Official languages: Pashtu and Dari (Afghan Persian)

Political system: Democratic Republic

Highest organ of state power: Revolutionary Council which controls all state and government activities and confirms the general policy of the government. It elects the government as the highest organ of executive power responsible to the Revolutionary Council and names the Chairman of the Revolutionary Council who is at the same time the titular head of state.

Chairman of the Revolutionary Council and Head of State: Babrak Karmal

The National Patriotic Front associates the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan, the Afghanistan Trade Union Council, the Democratic Union of Youth of Afghanistan, the Democratic Union of Women of Afghanistan, the Union of Agricultural Cooperatives of Afghanistan, the Union of Authors and Poets of Afghanistan, the Union of Journalists of Afghanistan, the Union of Artists of Afghanistan, the Organization of Peace, Friendship and Solidarity of Afghanistan, the Union of Economic Advisers of Afghanistan, the Council of Scientists and Religious Representatives of Afghanistan and the Council of Tribal Representatives of Afghanistan.

A COUNTRY OF CROSSROADS AND CONTRASTS

Afghanistan, the territory of which belonged to the centre of the Asia of ancient times, was large enough to provide a living for the people. Its rugged terrain formed a barrier to invaders (who, however, still managed to penetrate into the country through high mountain passes).

The country was called "Master of the Crossroads", which was fully deserved because of the Silk Route used by merchants and traders between East and West.

The beginnings of recorded history of Afghanistan date back to the sixth century B. C.

The Persians penetrated into Afghanistan up to the western Punjab and with them the first Greek historians reached the valley of the Indus River. Persian influence lasted for a long time and is still evident from preserved columns and sculptures of lions in some old towns in Afghanistan. Alexander the Great conquered Afghanistan. He crossed the Indus and by way of Baluchistan and Iran returned to Babylonia.

The practical result of these first adventurous invasions was the opening up of the way between East and West. Alexander left Greek settlers in the country who influenced the creation of a Greek-Bactrian government. In this sphere Greek realism encountered and mingled with Indian spiritual teaching and manifested itself after the third century B. C. when Buddhism

penetrated into Afghanistan in Kandahar Greek Buddhist art.

Up until the seventh century A. D. Afghanistan was a great centre of Buddhism whose influence in literature and the arts was felt as far off as China and the countries of the Far East.

During this era the country became the transitory route for nomadic tribes of Scythians, Kushans, Ephthalites and White Huns from Central Asia. Some of these nomads at the beginning of the Christian era created the Kushan Empire during which Buddhism underwent great changes. Its new school, Mahajana (Great Circle), replaced the old, Hinajana (Little Circle).

The power of the Kushans weakened after the third century A. D. and Kabul fell to the Ephthalites and White Huns (nomadic Mongolian origin), who destroyed Buddhist monasteries and murdered the people. But already at the time when the conquerors still roamed over the land the Arab Muslims appeared on the scene. They were unable to conquer all of Afghanistan, but they succeeded in getting Islam to take root in the land, which became the link between the Arabic and the old cultures.

Islam became the chief religion of the Afghans, but in the thirteenth century its development was held back by Genghis Khan's Mongols. Such centres of culture and art as the "Mother of Cities" Balkh, Bamian, Herat, Ghazni and others were reduced to rubble and ashes.

The ensuing conclusions that suppressing unhappiness is not within human power meant the beginning of fatalism and pessimism which lasted until modern times and is the heritage which the Afghan revolution must still cope with today.

Incursions by intruders damaged Afghanistan's importance as the Asian trading centre

(where merchants from China, India and distant western countries came to exchange goods) and also as a centre where culture and ideas were encountered. The opening of the sea route from Europe to India through the Cape of Good Hope (Vasco da Gama 1498) dealt a mortal blow to the Silk Route. The loss of links between Afghanistan and distant countries stopped the influence of foreign cultures and ideas and deprived it of wealth that it had thus far gained.

A gleam of hope came in the 18th century when a national government was established in Kandahar, but it committed a fatal mistake. The Afghans penetrated into Persia and occupied Isfahan. However, they could not remain isolated in a foreign country and so they were annihilated. At home there was chaos and disorder lasting until the middle of the century when, after a national uprising, the country came under the domination of King Durr - i - Durran (Pearl of Pearls) of the Abdali (then called Durrani) tribe; but after his death the empire fell apart and this was contributed to by the wars with the Sikhs and Persians and later the rivalry of England (two Anglo-Afghan wars: 1838—1842, 1878—1881) and Czarist Russia, countries which attempted to rule Afghan territory. Inside Afghanistan civil wars continued until the end of the 19th century.

It was not until 1919, after the third victorious war against the English that Afghanistan got rid of foreign influence and established its own government. For the people there was no great change — feudalism remained.

There are few countries with such a diversified history as Afghanistan and there are still fewer in which the heritage of previous eras and influences of traditional religion are expressed as strongly as here. Conquerors, of whom there

have been many, have influenced the way of life. In the course of time some races have preserved their original characteristics, others have merged with different tribes.

One of the proofs of this stage is that besides the two main languages, Pashtu and Dari (Afghan Persian), a great number of languages have been preserved in different parts of the land. Another proof is the number of tribes and clans. The largest ethnic group are the Pashtuns who are of Indo-European origin and after them come the Tadzhiks, Hazaras, Uzbeks, Turkmen, Kirghizes, Baluchists and a small group of Nuristanis, also Kafirs who consider themselves to be "pure Aryan". Living here, too, are Arabs, Hindus, Sikhs, Jews, and others.

Pashtuns consider themselves to be direct descendants of Aryans and real Afghans. There is, however, a legend that they are of Jewish origin, a branch of the Israeli king Saul. Originally they are supposed to have lived in Syria.

Afghanistan is a country of contrasts. Winters are cold, wet and muddy and the summers are hot, dry and dusty. Even day and night temperatures vary greatly. At noon there is oppressive heat, but after sunset it is cold and at night there is often frost. The magnificent mountain regions, scenic beauty of green valleys, wild streams, willows, poplars and plane trees alternate with desert, dust and wasteland and stifling winds.

The north is cut off by the giant Hindu Kush mountain barrier through whose passes leading into the valley of the Indus River merchants and pilgrims of past centuries and also invading armies travelled. To a certain extent the geographical position and natural conditions determined the history of Afghanistan, and they could not help having some influence on the

customs, character and way of thinking of the inhabitants. Afghans know how to be loving friends but also dangerous enemies who do not forgive and are guided by the law of blood revenge.

The low level of social development caused the everlasting division of the nation into tribes and clans which, because of the non-existence of transportation and telecommunications, led to an isolated life and concentration on particular customs, cultures and languages. Only in recent years, thanks to the stormy development of social relations, has there been a definite formation of the nation in the modern sense of the word.

Feudal conditions prevailing in the country until modern times rested on the power of the monarchy and in the period preceding the April Revolution, on the reactionary regime of Daud and on those tenets of Islamic law which hold ownership to be sacred.

The last kings of Afghanistan were Muhammad Nadir Shah and his son Muhammad Zahir Shah, whose rule ended in the 1973 palace revolt in which the monarchy was overthrown and Afghanistan became a republic.

WHY THE STORM CAME

In 1973 the monarchist regime in Afghanistan fell, but did the republic bring the longed-for changes? Did it open up new horizons for all the people and bring about changes for its most populous and long-suffering component — the farmers? Everyone believed that it would. The republic breathed with new hope. At first not many people realized that the president of Afghanistan, the one who had led the overthrow, was a member of the royal family — the cousin of the deposed king — and as part of the royal government had played a leading role for many years — Muhammad Daud.

Daud, a pensioned general and the king's cousin, placed himself at the head of the uprising of young officers who saw in him the manly advocate of urgent reform. He seized government power when the king was out of the country. He revoked the constitution of 1964, dismissed the Shura (parliament) and placed the courts under executive control. He forbade all royal titles other than his own — Sadar (a member of the king's family). Besides being President he kept the posts of Prime Minister and Foreign and Defence Ministers. He promised reforms and democratic management in the country which, as shown by his five-year rule, he did not realize.

Time which verifies resolutions and confronts them with deeds pronounced its verdict in Afghanistan, too. Even though there were several signs which, however, did not change the substance of the matter, the hoped for political and social changes were not brought about with the establishment of the republican system of government in Afghanistan. The late president was a usurper who aimed for the highest power but who did not intend to interfere with the old social structure and did not care about the backwardness of the country and the general poverty which the people of Afghanistan endlessly suffered.

In reality Daud's government was more dictatorial than that of his overthrown royal cousin, to whom he regularly sent to his pleasant Italian exile a fat income. People in the country began to talk of the "royal republic". Afghan banknotes of that time bore the portrait of the now overthrown president with "blue blood". Still worse was the fact that during the five years of the Daud regime the people had less and less money. While during the monarchy the national income was some one hundred dollars per person, according to the estimates of United Nations experts, during the Daud government it fell to seventy-two dollars (a year), which is one of the lowest in the world, a beggar's portion of the basic needs.

In the countryside there were still feudal and semi-feudal conditions such as had existed ten, fifty and one hundred years previously. The story of the early life of the first Chairman of the Revolutionary Council Nur M. Taraki is well known among the Afghan people. As a young boy from a poor family he worked on a farm where his main duty was to carry the farmer's son on his back to and from school. The distant

school was only for a few chosen children and this small, barefooted and ragged bearer of a living burden learned to read and write much later.

There was an ever present burden of incessant debt hanging over the poverty stricken peasants. Usurious rates for borrowed money were one of the sources of extreme exploitation of the Afghan peasant who paid as much as fifty per cent and higher interest rates. There was a loan called salam which was made available to the peasant whose family, because of a poor harvest, did not have anything to eat in the spring. For instance, the landowner offered him grain worth some two hundred afghanis (about 7 U. S. Dollars), but he had to promise to pay back to the landowner twice as much. Then there was a third possibility which was most commonly used and according to this the peasant became a kind of serf — in payment of his debt the landowners took part of the peasant's land until the debt was repaid along with high interest rates.

As a first step in setting aside these injustices the Revolutionary Afghan Government decided that if the creditor had held such land for four years he had already got his money back and so he had to return the land to the peasant. Later on the government completely abolished such debts.

Before the Revolution land ownership was such that 83 per cent of the owners cultivated 39 per cent of the land, 12 per cent of the owners worked 13 per cent of the land, and the remaining 5 per cent cultivated 48 per cent of the soil. In the first group the average area cultivated by one peasant was no greater than four hectares, in the second the area was four to ten hectares and in the third it was ten to thirty

thousand or more hectares. At the same time half of the peasants had no land at all.

That was under the monarchy. Did anything change when it was overthrown? Daud talked about land reform and this was even proclaimed. In the first part of four stages the area of the holding of each farmer was to be ascertained, in the second part the area reported was to be controlled with the reality. Then there was to be confiscation and in the fourth stage of the reform the land was to be divided. During the five years of Daud's rule not even the first stage was carried through. Even though the land reform law came into effect in 1976, in all the country only 2,400 families received a total of 6,000 hectares. Agrarian reform became a farce.

It was no different in other spheres where the situation urgently called for progressive changes. In the few years preceding the April Revolution investment in the so-called development sector was in a steady decline. The planned investment did not bring the presupposed revenue into the state budget and financial problems were solved by levying higher indirect taxes, which fell like a heavy burden on the poorly living masses. The educational system did not develop in the desired manner. There was a catastrophic situation in the health services. In pre-revolutionary Afghanistan there was one doctor for every 16,000 people and one hospital bed for 4,980 patients (according to the Information Bulletin of the Ministry of Planning and the Central Statistical Office of the Afghanistan Democratic Republic in 1978). It is true that in Kabul one could find a comparatively large number of apothecaries, but the stark reality was that in pre-revolutionary times three-quarters of Afghans were beyond the reach of

any health care whatsoever.

There was no health insurance in factories. When an employee became ill and could not go to work he received no income. When a person was injured at work he received no compensation, and similarly no compensation was received by the family whose provider lost his life at work. When a worker was ill for a longer time he could be sure that he would be thrown out of his job. During the monarchy as well as during the Daud royal republic there were supporting funds where the workers could deposit their money to put them through hard times when they were unable to work. However, even such primitive forms of workers' associations which were common in Europe in the previous century were officially forbidden.

These pre-revolutionary conditions in Afghanistan led to a substantial increase in political and social tension in the country. Daud's government decided on the hardest measures, even physical liquidation, to get rid of the People's Democratic Party, which represented the most outstanding and best organized and progressive opposition. After the foundation of the party on January 1, 1965, there followed endless persecution. In April 1978 the party leadership was to be wiped out forever. On April 17, 1978, developments in Afghanistan came to a decisive stage. On that day the well known and popular progressive leader Mir Azar Kaybar was assassinated in Kabul, an ominous crime and a warning of the extremely brutal methods planned by reactionary forces.

Kaybar's funeral turned into demonstrations with many thousands of participants. "Previously when a leader had a state funeral several hundred people, or at the most a thousand, attended; but this funeral of a progressive figure

became an important and huge political occasion and it did not matter to us that the officials wanted us to disclose ourselves as a party during the funeral," declared one of the active participants of those stormy revolutionary days.

All day long there were excited anti-reactionary and anti-imperialist demonstrations in the streets of the Afghan capital.

At the session of the reactionary Daud government on April 25, 1978, it was decided to arrest the leading figures of the democratic and progressive movement. And this was really carried out. During the night arrests were made of N. M. Taraki, B. Karmal and tens of people who later became important representatives in the revolutionary regime. The arresting commandos also imprisoned several progressive army officers. (It was interesting to note that the later dictator H. Amin was held only under house arrest.)

The real danger that this purposeful and vigorous effort of reactionary forces would deprive the progressive movement of its leaders accelerated the beginning of the revolution. A decisive role in the revolution was played by the leaders of the People's Democratic Party and the public-supported army, or rather the air force and several tank units.

This revolution was not a hazardous and reckless reaction to the behaviour of the government, but a well prepared strike in which, naturally, it was not possible to foresee who would be the victor. The People's Democratic Party developed from the beginning very intensive political work in all stratas of Afghan society. This even concerned the army, in which the party achieved a certain influence whose extent could be judged by the fact that with few exceptions no military unit actively backed the old

regime. On the contrary the army as a whole gave its support to the People's Democratic Party as the avant garde force in the country.

What happened on that historic day, April 27, 1978? At noon two tank brigades reached the area around the presidential palace. Not many tanks were involved in the actual siege of the palace because it was necessary to block several important ways leading to the capital city in order to hinder possible counter actions. While moving towards the presidential palace several key buildings in the town such as the Ministries of Defence and Interior, the radio station and the main post office were also occupied.

To get command of the presidential palace was no easy matter since it is an extensive complex of buildings with unusually strong protection consisting of tanks, armed vehicles and anti-tank weapons. According to information from one of those directly involved in the fighting, the presidential guard had weapons which were not available to the revolutionaries. Therefore Daud and the government which was just in session in the palace refused to capitulate. The then Minister of Defence succeeded in escaping from the palace. He tried to mobilize units which did not at first side with the revolution, but he was unsuccessful.

The revolution was victorious by the evening of April 27, even though the next night the fighting continued with the liquidation of several small pro-Daud units. It was a cold, wet night, and fog impaired vision so that the helicopters of the revolutionaries had to fly low in order to achieve their goal.

The presidential palace complex was completely occupied by the morning of April 28, and the former president Daud refused to give up until the last minute. At seven in the morning

five revolutionary soldiers entered his room and asked him to surrender since he did not represent anybody and there was no respect for him, but he pulled out his pistol and shot one of the soldiers in the shoulder. In reply machine gun-fire was heard. Previously Daud had even been shooting at his own children who were urging him to capitulate.

Two circumstances obviously played a very important role in the successful revolutionary turn of history in Afghanistan — the speed of the whole revolutionary action and the engagement of the air force which did not allow government tanks to leave the presidential palace. In addition it was the courage and heroism of revolutionary fighters who resolved to fight to the finish. One of the participants of the fight for the presidential palace said: "We gave everything we had. We knew that if we failed, nothing would remain of our children still in their cradles."

The bourgeois press of the western countries maintained that a great number of people had lost their lives in the revolution and that there was vast destruction. However, anyone visiting Kabul soon after the revolution could see the bias and insidiousness of such claims. Even though the presidential palace complex is right in the centre of the city and only a broad tree lined street separates it from the normal city housing not a single dwelling was damaged. It was obvious that the bourgeois mass media from the very beginning of the Afghan revolution tried to create an atmosphere of animosity and blind hatred toward it.

Everything new and progressive has been victorious over that which was old and reactionary. On the evening of April 27 the then Commander in Chief of the Air Force and Anti-air Weapons,

Colonel Abdulkadir, made the first proclamation of the victorious revolution: "Fellow citizens, for the first time in the history of Afghanistan the remains of the monarchy, the burdens, oppression and power of the family of Nadir Shah have been liquidated. The general state power in Afghanistan has passed over into the hands of the Afghan people . . ."

The land in the heart of Asia lived through decisive hours in its modern history. From the darkness of the Middle Ages a light of real hope burst forth for a dignified life for all. The result of the revolution was that "the political sovereignty of the exploiting class ended and was replaced by the sovereignty of the class which represented the interests of the suffering and oppressed people . . . a new state in the service of the people . . . a people's state". This is how the greatest upheaval and most hopeful changes in the development of the country were characterized.

The Afghan revolution gradually began to gain force, but subjectivism and the contravention of the norms of democratic centralism were becoming ever more evident in the leadership of the party and state. The tendency towards breaking up into factions — the old mistake — appeared once again. The then Deputy Prime Minister, Hafizullah Amin, succeeded in concentrating most of the power in his own hands. By threat, gossip and later by repressive action against his political opponents and by favouring his "friends" he was able to subdue the security organs as well as part of the army command. He managed to see that Taraki met only those he approved of. He presented Taraki with falsified proof of a conspiracy against him and as Deputy Prime Minister responsible for foreign pol-

icy, the army and the security of the state, he arranged to send abroad persons who stood in his way at home (Babrak Karmal was sent to Prague), or he had them imprisoned, tortured or murdered.

On April 30, 1978, the Revolutionary Council changed the official title of the state to the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan. It also elected N. M. Taraki Chairman of the Revolutionary Council (Head of State) and Prime Minister.

The Taraki government took over the weighty heritage of the backward state where feudal order was still dominant. Ninety per cent of the people were illiterate and 85 per cent of the people living in the countryside existed under unbearable conditions. The revolution was born as a consequence of historical need of objective and subjective conditions in Afghan society.

Among Taraki's deputies was Hafizullah Amin, who soon appeared as a dark figure of the revolution.

THE TROJAN HORSE OF THE REACTION

In September 1979 Nur Muhammad Taraki was assassinated. According to the first version circulated in the world press he was shot in a skirmish between him and Amin and their personal guards. However, a new disclosure which has become known in Kabul describes his death quite differently. On the order of Amin, Taraki was suffocated with a pillow by four members of Amin's band, one of whom was the chief of the secret police.

Amin usurped power and began a government of cruel oppression aimed against extensive parts of Afghan society, against the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan, military personnel loyal to the revolution and representatives of the intelligentsia and church who supported the revolution.

Hafizullah Amin, who had claimed to be a pupil and follower of Taraki, split the party, imprisoned or murdered its outstanding members and at the same time destroyed its popularity by illegal actions.

Among the Afghan intelligentsia there were many sincere and devoted members of the People's Democratic Party, who with the support of the armed forces and in agreement with the wish of the population prepared the victory of the April Revolution.

Amin's group imprisoned and tortured people

for every little sign of opposition. Amin had 1,000 members of the party executed for their doubts about his policy, or who were considered to be potentially dangerous. The government, military and party officials were bound by a personal oath of loyalty. He forced even those who did not have the preconditions for membership in the party to join it.

Amin released his son-in-law Assadullah from Jalalabad even before he had finished his military service and named him Deputy Minister of Health, of Foreign Affairs, Secretary of the Kabul party organization and even leader of the feared espionage organization KAM.

Amin's older brother Abdullah acquired much property by fraud and machinations with cotton and defrauding employees of the state society Spinzar. He received from Amin as a gift a mansion next to the Ministry of Interior for which he bought furnishings for 200,000 afghanis from the state treasury.

Amin used up almost all the state funds when he doubled the wages of officers and cadets who had completed only a three-month course in order to win them over to his side. After the assassination of Taraki the army was demoralized by purges and desertions.

Hafizullah, Assadullah and Abdullah Amin and their close associates bound by blood or personal ties, misused security organs including the KAM espionage organization for their own criminal aims. At the same time they used their functions for doing away with and terrorizing their opponents.

In Amin's espionage network there were many mentally deviated people, often even sadists, who enjoyed the suffering of their fellow citizens. However, they were also involved in corruption so that they left real criminals to

roam about in freedom while they imprisoned people who were completely innocent.

Women who succeeded in getting near Amin in order to beg for mercy for their husbands were usually dismissed with the reply, "Find another husband," which Amin accompanied with a smile as if it were a good joke.

Amin was a demagogue. For instance, he proclaimed that the first stage of land reform had been completed; but that reform remained only on paper. In some regions, under stiff pressure, the division of farm land actually was achieved, but the water which was indispensable for the soil remained under the control of the rich farmers. Securing agricultural production was not well thought out. The landless farmers who got a piece of land, for instance, stopped growing profitable cotton and sowed only grain and vegetables for the needs of their own family without any excess for the supply of the population.

Amin's system encouraged informers who settled their own accounts and needlessly brought unhappiness to other people for which shameful service they received money.

To cover his inhuman activities Amin made use of the revolutionary mottos. It is known now that he was preparing a counter-revolutionary putsch for December 29, 1979. This was after the opposition to his terror, which took place in most Afghan provinces. Amin replied with the execution of 2,000 political prisoners and the imprisonment of tens of thousands of other people. It is estimated that altogether Amin had 6,000 Afghans murdered.

It was not until the coming of Babrak Karmal that the iron gates of the prisons in Kabul and other provinces were opened. For the Kabul prison stronghold now generally called "Amin's

bastille" the foundation stone was laid during the Daud regime. Pouli Charkhi, as it is called, was built to accommodate 5,000 prisoners but during Amin's rule there were from 13,000 to 15,000 "enemies of the state" imprisoned there.

Many of the released prisoners were unable to say why they had been put in prison. They had been arrested at work, in factories, in the fields, or at their studies in the university libraries.

They recalled with horror the different methods of torture by their jailors — electric shocks, cutting flesh, tearing off skin, pulling out finger and toe nails, nails being driven into their bodies, burning and beating during interrogation, and many victims still bear the marks of these horrible tortures.

Professor Mohammad Zahma at the Faculty of Literature who was hospitalized in Kabul still half a year after the fall of Amin, said that Amin was an ambitious, fame-seeking, conceited madman, who was capable of killing his own parents in order to realize his dirty aims.

Zahma was picked up on the street and imprisoned in Pouli Charkhi, where he was subjected to cruel torture. He said, "Amin used his own special kind of fascism to disorganize the nation. He covered his fascist thoughts with radical revolutionary slogans and words. He was an extremely astute person who veiled his crimes in revolutionary phrases to discredit and misuse the revolution. He knew that he could not continue long in his abominable work because it was against conscience and human dignity, and that gave us hope and faith."

There are thousands of terrifying cases of victims of Amin's cruel government. Among them are workers and farmers who it is true Amin covered with praise in his tirades against the

“enemies of the revolution” and claimed that everything between heaven and earth belongs to the working class, but at the same time in reality the members of this class represented the greatest part of his victims.

He behaved similarly with the intelligentsia.

Today it is already a historical fact that Amin was surrounded by a group of gangsters who plundered, tortured and shed blood. His elder brother, along with a group of bandits, terrorized the Kabul region and attacked villages and isolated farms.

Amin’s clique turned Pouli Charkhi into a concentration camp. It is called “slaughterhouse” in Kabul. Pouli Charkhi became a breeding ground of infectious diseases and the scene of slowly dying patriots and innocent people.

Amin’s followers had close ties with international reaction and were supposed to be used to destroy the revolution. In a letter to Imam Khomeini Karmal wrote that if Amin had not been thrown out of power tens of thousands more patriots including church representatives would have been murdered. The reactionary putsch prepared by Amin along with foreign secret services was also to have been a step against the Islamic revolution in neighbouring Iran.

Imperialist countries turned a deaf ear to the facts of the suffering of the Afghan people during the rule of Amin. It suited them that he discredited the revolution and secretly prepared a counter-revolutionary overthrow, which was to drown the revolution in blood.

The new stage of the April Revolution did away with Amin’s terrorist regime and opened the way to security, happiness and the blossoming of Afghanistan. When Amin did not succeed in passing the counter-revolutionary putsch into

their hands, the United States used Soviet aid to the Afghan revolution as a pretext for extending bases in the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf and for supplying arms to the counter-revolution by way of Pakistan.

Afghans have learned not only from their own past history but from the bitter realities of the bloody government of Amin and they are determined not to allow this cruel period to be repeated endangering peace in their country.

Amin disparaged the April Revolution by his sectarian policy and the introduction of cruel terror. He endangered the further development of the Afghan revolution and was therefore swept away by the forces which were dissatisfied with his methods.

Babrak Karmal was placed at the head of the revolutionary forces by the People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan on December 27, 1979, and his government prepared a programme for the second stage of the April Revolution.

One of Karmal’s first steps even before the new government was named was to proclaim a general amnesty and release thousands of prisoners, members of the People’s Democratic Party as well as other citizens.

WHO IS BABRAK KARMAL

Babrak Karmal was born in 1929 in Kamari (Kabul province), the son of an army general. After graduating from secondary school in Amani he continued his studies in medicine and later attended the Law School at Kabul University. Already at that time he joined a leftwing intellectual group striving for the democratization of political and social life. From 1953 to 1957 he was imprisoned for his participation in student demonstrations, from 1960 to 1964 he worked for the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Planning and from 1964 to 1973 he was a deputy to the House of the People.

Along with Nur Muhammad Taraki he founded on January 1, 1965, in illegality, the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan, which from its very beginning was extremely active at all levels of society especially among the members of the armed forces. At the constituent congress of the party N. M. Taraki became First Secretary and Babrak Karmal was elected member of the Central Committee, member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee and Second Secretary of the Central Committee of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan.

Nur M. Taraki began to publish the magazine *Khalq* /People/ which was soon discontinued by the government. In 1967 after a rupture within

the party Babrak Karmal began to publish the magazine *Parcham* /Flag/.

After the overthrow of the monarchist regime by Sardar Muhammad Daud in July 1973, there arose different opinions among the leadership of the party as to the attitude to the Daud regime. When it was shown that Daud had not fulfilled the proclaimed reforms and had betrayed those forces which had supported him, the *Khalq* and *Parcham* factions of the party joined forces in 1977 in unanimous opposition to his regime. Along with other leading representatives of the party Babrak Karmal was imprisoned in April 1978, but still in that same month all those arrested were freed by the national democratic revolution.

The highest power in the state was taken over by the Revolutionary Council, which at its first session on April 30 elected Babrak Karmal as Deputy Chairman of the Council. At the same time he became Second Party Secretary and Deputy Prime Minister. These functions he held for two months and then in the second half of 1978 he became Ambassador to Czechoslovakia.

When in December 1979 the People's Armed Forces, following the directive of the Party's healthy core, overthrew Amin's anti-people's regime, Karmal was elected to the highest party and state functions becoming General Secretary of the Central Committee of the People's Democratic Party, Prime Minister and Chairman of the Presidium of the Revolutionary Council, thus becoming head of state.

THE AIMS OF THE PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC PARTY

Under circumstances of deep rooted social and religious traditions, in a country where nine out of ten adults were illiterate, it was unusually difficult to create conditions for a national democratic revolution. Nevertheless, the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan, among whose founding members was Babrak Karmal the present Chairman of the Revolutionary Council, has accomplished this task.

In view of the developing state of the country the party assumes as its historical duty the expansion of social and political programmes and the achievement of the victory of the national, democratic, anti-feudal and anti-imperialistic revolution.

Among the first tasks announced by Babrak Karmal were these aims some of which have already been completely or partly accomplished:

- release of political prisoners who survived Amin's cruel regime,
- abolishment of persecution, house searches and confiscation of property,
- respect for the principles of Islam, freedom of confession and religious ceremonies, protection of the family, the principle of lawful protection of private property obtained without exploitation, misappropriation, bribery, usury, hoarding or smuggling,
- restoration of personal security, revolution-

- any order and peace in the land,
- creation of conditions for democratic freedom, including the right to found progressive and patriotic parties, freedom of the press, assembly and the right to work,
- overcome poverty, sickness, illiteracy, secure economic development and employment and do away with nationality and social oppression,
- build an independent national economy, speed up the economic growth in harmony with scientific principles of social economic development, gradually build up industry and raise the standard of living of the working masses.

In the forefront of contemporary efforts is the realization of further stages of land reform, getting rid of the remains of antiquated feudal ties, control of foreign trade, extending the public sector in various economic spheres, protection and support for artisans, farmers, small businessmen, democratization of the state apparatus, cultivation and development of the languages and cultures of nationalities and tribes and doing away with influences and the remains of the old and also the new colonialism.

The revolutionary government proclaimed that with resolute determination it will abolish all forms of exploitation of man by man and that it will strongly crush the opposition of reaction and build a new progressive society in Afghanistan. Only in the second stage of the April Revolution can it be claimed that these resolutions are really being introduced into practice.

FOREIGN POLICY OF AFGHANISTAN

The foreign policy of Afghanistan is built on the basis of principle, positive and active non-alignment; it supports the policies of peaceful coexistence and détente. It calls for the limitation of strategic weapons, a policy of general and complete disarmament and respect of human rights and a policy of non-alignment. The government has confirmed that Afghanistan will act as a member of the United Nations Organization and a member of the movement of the nonaligned countries. It also fulfils its proclamation that it will respect all agreements and alliances signed between Afghanistan and other countries. It cooperates with other countries and with all peace-loving forces in the broad front against wars, colonialism, imperialism, Zionism, fascism, racism and apartheid.

It extends and deepens international solidarity with countries of the socialist community, revolutionary and national liberation movements in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

It fulfils the agreement of December 5, 1978, on friendship, good neighbourliness and cooperation with the Soviet Union, which guarantees peace and security in the region. It develops the agreement on the highest level and strengthens Afghan-Soviet friendship.

The government of the Democratic Republic

of Afghanistan will take the initiative in strengthening friendly ties and honourably strives to solve tension in relations with Pakistan. It wants to strengthen historical ties with India.

Revolutionary Afghanistan extends a hand to all countries in the world with the aim to secure peace and friendly relations, it intends to strengthen ties with Islamic and Arabic nations and fully supports the struggle of the heroic people of Palestine.

In this connection it is necessary to discuss in greater detail the relations between Afghanistan and the Soviet Union since it is this very question which has been distorted by many irresponsible journalists. The Soviet Union's fraternal help to the Afghan revolution is being presented as the "Afghan question".

In its foreign policy the Afghan government relies completely on the Agreement on friendship, good neighbourliness and cooperation with the Soviet Union, which was signed on December 5, 1978, and in which it is stated among other things: "Both parties to the agreement, proceeding from the tradition of friendship, good neighbourly relations and also in agreement with the Charter of the United Nations Organization will mutually consult and in the event of agreement by both parties, will undertake the necessary measures to ensure the security, independence and territorial integrity of both countries. In the interest of strengthening the ability to defend themselves both countries will develop cooperation in the military sphere . . ."

Soviet-Afghan friendship, mutual aid and cooperation have had deep and firm roots since the last century when the people of Afghanistan waged long years of bitter struggle against the British colonizers whose aim was to subjugate the country. Even at that time the nations of

Czarist Russia showed solidarity with the Afghans in their heroic struggle against colonial oppression. However, this solidarity did not take concrete form until after the victory of the October Revolution in Russia and especially after the February revolt in 1919 which placed Amanullah at the head of the government. In a letter to Lenin dated April 7, he informed the leader of the Russian proletariat that he considered it necessary to develop friendly relations with the nations of the Soviet Union. It was not long before the Soviet Union, as the first state, established diplomatic relations with Kabul thus recognizing Afghanistan as an independent and sovereign state.

A Soviet-Afghan Agreement on friendship was signed in Moscow on February 28, 1921, and five years later another step on the road to strengthening mutual friendly ties was taken with the signing of a bilateral Agreement on neutrality and mutual non-aggression. Still in the same year the imperialist powers tried to overthrow the progressive regime in Afghanistan and help the former ruler to regain power. It was also to the credit of the Soviet Union that the people of Afghanistan succeeded in averting this danger.

In 1931 a new Agreement on neutrality and mutual non-aggression based on the same principles of the 1926 Agreement was signed by the Soviet Union and Afghanistan, and in 1936 it was extended for another ten years.

This positive development of friendly relations between two neighbouring countries with different social systems was an unpleasant thorn in the flesh of all enemies of the first state of workers and farmers in the world and they did not intend to accept it.

The United States began to pay more atten-

tion to Afghanistan especially after the victory of the April Revolution and the Iranian Islamic Revolution which followed shortly after. After April 1978 the USA began to arm and train Afghan counter-revolutionaries based in Pakistan, hoping that with their help they would succeed in overthrowing the revolutionary government in Kabul and replace it with a reactionary regime which would be willing to make the territory of Afghanistan available for establishing military bases against the Soviet Union and for placing espionage equipment directly on the border with the Soviet Union. However, the Agreement between the government of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan and the Soviet Union of December 5, 1978, blocked speculations.

In accordance with Article 4 of this Agreement, in December 1979 Soviet soldiers came to the aid of the legal government of the people of Afghanistan.

The presence of Soviet troops in Afghanistan is a primary guarantee of the security of that country and its people.

Soviet units came to Afghanistan to help defend its territorial integrity and independence. The Soviet Union is unselfishly helping Afghan farmers with supplies of seeds, fertilizers and giving free supplies of food to parts of the country threatened by famine.

One of the basic principles of Soviet foreign policy is the systematic application of proletarian internationalism and solidarity. Therefore the Soviet Union could not passively stand by and watch the growing danger in Afghanistan of the imperialists assisted by their puppets, unleashing a white terror similar to the tragedy in Chile.

To every sensibly thinking person it is clear

that Soviet help was offered in accordance with international law and that it will end as soon as international imperialism abandons its efforts to turn the clock back in Afghanistan.

THE ECONOMY OF AFGHANISTAN

The anti-people's policy of the royal regime and also of President M. Daud which was aimed at preserving the old feudal relations bequeathed to Afghanistan the ponderous legacy of general political, economic, social and cultural backwardness. Even with its rich natural resources, pre-revolutionary Afghanistan belonged to the world's least developed and poorest countries. The national income per capita in 1978—1979 was some 150 U.S. dollars; the average life span was a mere 42 years. With only 12 per cent of the adult population able to read and write, Afghanistan ranked among those countries with the highest illiteracy.

The April Revolution created favourable conditions for overcoming this backwardness, for the planned development of the national economy and a continuing improvement in the living and cultural standards of the people.

The very first proclamations of the Revolutionary Council and government of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan singled out the aims to abolish feudal and prefeudal ties, overcome economic and cultural backwardness, build an independent national economy, speed up economic growth by industrialization, realize

land reform, ensure the development and modernization of agriculture and constantly improve the living and cultural standards of the broad masses of the people.

These aims were put into concrete form in the five-year plan of economic and social development of Afghanistan in 1979—1984 which was approved by the government in April 1979. By effective use of all obtainable resources in the country the plan envisaged an increase in national income at the end of the five year period of 25-29 per cent and an annual average growth of 4.5—5.2 per cent. To insure this increase, heretofore unknown in the history of Afghanistan, it is planned to invest 97—106 thousand million afghanis into the development of the national economy. The planned extent of investment is almost 2.5 times higher than in the previous five years. Industry's share is 39.5 per cent, while 29.8 per cent is earmarked for agriculture, 17.1 per cent for transportation and 13.6 per cent will be used in the social sphere.

For the development and modernization of agriculture, which at the present time contributes some 60 per cent towards the national income and the country's exports and which accounts for some 70 per cent of the labour force, the plan envisages the irrigation of 20,000 hectares and the improvement of the irrigation systems already in operation on 60,000 hectares of farm land.

Industrial production, whose share in the national income so far has not yet reached 14 per cent, is expected to increase by 1.6 to 1.7. The plan sets forth a number of concrete tasks for the production of natural gas, coal, artificial fertilizers, building materials, electric power and for the food and textile industries.

So far in Afghanistan there is no railway sys-

tem and the existing road network is inadequate for the needs of the country and so much attention is given in the plan to the construction of roads and the development of transportation.

Important tasks also set forth for the social sphere concern housing, improved water supply, creating conditions and facilities for doubling the number of pupils attending basic schools, increasing the number of university students 2—2.3 times, hospital beds 1.6—1.8 times and other projects directly influencing the living and cultural standards of the people.

In the development of the national economy the government of Afghanistan devotes great attention to the expansion of production in the private sector which accounts for more than 80 per cent of the national income. For instance, the plan presupposes offering advantageous credits to farms for the purchase of high quality seeds, artificial fertilizers, and equipment. There is general support for the development of private commerce, industry, and trades and crafts. Representatives of the association of private industry, businessmen and other entrepreneurs have been invited to join the so-called Economic Advisory Council whose aim is to assure the coordinated and all-round development in all spheres of the Afghan national economy.

As a result of the more than three-year undeclared war against Afghanistan the demanding tasks of the five-year plan cannot be fully realized. Some factories are fulfilling their targets under difficult circumstances because production and investment activity is obstructed by bands of counter-revolutionaries. Some of the means originally destined for the development of production and social programmes have to be devoted, for instance, to repair of buildings,

roads and irrigation systems destroyed by counter-revolutionaries.

On the other hand, despite the efforts of the counter-revolution to sabotage and divert the normal flow of life in the country, it has not been able to upset the national economy to such an extent as to cause a sharp decrease in agricultural or industrial production. On the contrary, thanks to the attention given by the Revolutionary Council and the government to the development of the national economy, it was possible to ensure the supply of the population, to stabilize the prices of basic needs and in many spheres to achieve better results than before the revolution.

Despite the efforts of the counter-revolution to completely disrupt transportation (some 1,500 trucks were destroyed by terrorists) as a result of the building of state transportation centres, transportation continues to function satisfactorily and supplies continue to get through to Kabul and other towns.

In the interest of securing the food supply for the population it is extremely important that the planned tasks in the production of grain have on the whole been successfully realized. Very good results have been achieved in the growing of fruit, which in dried or fresh form is an important export item. As a result of the destruction of harvests by counter-revolutionaries the plans for growing technical vegetation could not be fully realized.

Most of the important factories in the country are operating normally, for instance, the chemical plant in Mazar Sharif, the hydro power station in Jangalak, and other factories. The production of natural gas continues (the annual production is some three thousand million cubic metres). Good results are also being

achieved in the sphere of trades and crafts, and Afghanistan has been able to increase its traditional export of carpets, leathers, leather products, wool and other hand-made products.

Afghanistan's industrial production is still on a low level and so much of its domestic needs must come from abroad. It is a great success for the young Democratic Republic of Afghanistan that even under the present-day complicated conditions it is capable of securing a constant growth in volume of foreign trade. While in 1977 the foreign trade turnover was cca 800 million dollars, in 1980 it reached 1,200 million dollars, and for the year 1981 it was expected to reach 1,450 million dollars. A positive fact is also the favourable balance of trade compared with previous years. At the present time Afghanistan's biggest trading partner is the Soviet Union which shares by more than one-half in Afghanistan's foreign trade turnover. Afghanistan, however, is intensively expanding foreign trade also with the advanced capitalist states and the developing countries. In 1980, for instance, compared with the previous year, Afghanistan's trade with Great Britain increased by some 46.6 per cent, with the German Federal Republic 42.9 per cent Japan 35.2 per cent and India by 18.2 per cent. The most important export items are dried and fresh fruit, natural gas, carpets, leathers, skins, and products of various crafts and trades.

Naturally the new Afghan government is making an effort for peace and security and wants to administer internal affairs according to the will of the Afghan people.

It is simple, but for imperialist countries it seems it is difficult to understand. How the United States, for instance, can see danger to its

national interests in such a positive effort can only be explained in one way — its imperialist policy.

ISLAM

Present-day Afghan people are of mixed origin and their cultural heritage and religion unites them.

It is very strange how Islam has played such an important role in anti-Afghan and anti-Soviet propaganda.

It is paradoxical when western propaganda tries to portray Afghan revolutionary representatives or the Soviet Union as enemies of Islam. The proclamation of the Soviet government to all Muslim workers of Russia and the East dated November 20, 1917, begins with the words: Comrades, Brothers! The chairman of the Afghan Council of Islamic Theologians who recently visited the Soviet Union said on his return, "There, they respect Islam more than in Saudi Arabia."

There is no single proclamation of Babrak Karmal nor any public document of the government of Afghanistan which would not take into consideration the religious belief of the Muslims.

Rugged natural conditions and historical development also have had a positive influence. The Afghans have learned to be hardy and austere. They are proud that under the unfavourable conditions in which they live their nation has never been permanently conquered, that their country is one of the few in Asia that has

never been a colony of a world power. Three times the British tried to conquer Afghanistan and each time, despite their technical superiority, they were repelled.

The suffering of the people accumulated over the years, the old social system long outlived in other parts of the world, could be maintained only by ever increasing oppression. Progressive forces in the land, after spontaneous help from the whole nation, brought about a national democratic revolution.

Members of the overthrown class, the feudal lords, latifundists of the great bourgeoisie retreated mainly to neighbouring Pakistan and with the support of allied forces of imperialism began counter-revolutionary actions. Western propaganda machinery began to talk about them as "patriots" and "holy fighters for Islam".

The United States, as recently confirmed by *The Washington Post*, continues to offer direct aid to Afghan counter-revolutionaries in the form of supplies of weapons and money. Also participating in the alliance in the "holy Islamic war" against Afghanistan are Great Britain, Egypt, Israel and Saudi Arabia and Pakistan which offers its land.

Revolutionary changes in Afghanistan crossed the plans of Peking too, and the Afghan country is listed in Chinese records as "lost Chinese territory". In the eastern parts of the Wakhan Corridor on the Chinese border ever since the April Revolution there are bands armed with Chinese weapons and trained by Chinese instructors. It is known that Chinese diplomats in Afghanistan had their fingers in the organization of armed discontent in Kabul and surroundings and in Herat. There were Maoist organizations, above all Shoaleye javid (Eternal flame),

operating with extreme nationalists and Muslim brothers.

Maoists smuggled into the Islamic world the doctrine of "super power" which indicates a sign of equality between the United States and the Soviet Union. Today when Islamic nations fighting for national independence need to lean on a world force which supports their struggle unselfishly, these doctrines are especially dangerous.

At a meeting with journalists of the socialist countries Babrak Karmal said that his government addressed a letter to Ayatollah Khomeini offering friendship and mutual support on the basis of Islamic unity. The letter contains the statement that Afghanistan never will allow itself to be used as a base against Islamic Iran's revolution and it expressed the expectation that Iran takes the same stand. Karmal also announced diplomatic steps towards normalizing relations with Pakistan. He offered the hand of friendship to all neighbours, even those which, like Pakistan, directly threaten the Afghan revolution.

The new government programme declared the Islamic religion as holy. It guaranteed non-interference into family traditions, the preservation of private property and it declared approval of the creation of further political parties as long as they would support the revolution, freedom of the press and expression. It also announced that socialism is not its immediate aim.

But the basic revolutionary programme — land reform, general education, abolishment of illiteracy, women's equality, strengthening of the state economic sector — will be realized.

It is a matter of national democratic revolution, which is anti-feudal and anti-imperialistic.

There is a long list of those who are opposing

the people's movement ranging from former courtiers and followers of the king to groups of Maoists. Among them is Gulbuddin Hikmatjar, who is politically close to the Muslim brothers. As a paid agent of Pakistan counter-espionage he instigated the revolt in the Pandjseri region and he enjoys the favour of the CIA. In the new Amin government he was to have been prime minister.

Sajjid Ahmad Gajlani likes to be called the "father" of the Afghan counter-revolution. He claims his ancestry goes back to the Prophet Muhammad and he is the husband of the king's daughter. When he lost his automobile business in Kabul and extensive latifundia, he fled to Pakistan and began to call for a "holy war". He is chief of the United Islamic Revolutionary Council, which is a puppet organ maintained by the U.S. in Peshawar in northwest Pakistan.

Sibghatullah Mudjaddedi, former imam, comes from a religious family which is sadly famous for its cooperation with the English in conspiring against King Amanullah in 1929. He belongs to the so-called English Muslims, who formerly represented feudal religious stratas in Afghanistan which sold out to the British and supported them in the effort to make a colony out of Afghanistan. Today he serves the Americans in the same purpose.

Big farmers, some of the tribal leaders and Muslim clergy considered feudal status in the country, the surviving prejudices, backwardness and illiteracy to be a wall which the revolution would not break down.

Agrarian reform, which is a substance of revolutionary process, affected 40,000 big landowners who held three-quarters of the farm land. Its realization brought forth armed resistance.

Removing Amin and proclaiming a new policy, which characterizes the second stage of the April Revolution, had an immediate positive response. The masses and many members of the middle strata of the population gave it their support. The basis for civil war at which Amin's policy was aimed was removed.

Islam is the youngest of all world religions having originated in present-day Saudi Arabia at the beginning of the seventh century A.D. Muslims believe in one god, similar to Christians and Jews, whose religions markedly influenced Islam in its monotheistic faith.

Islam is not united in its teaching and faith. It falls into two basic sects — Sunna and Shiah. While the Sunnites observe "holy tradition" (sunni) that is the collection of legends of the life of Muhammad, the Shiites believe in the less orthodox tradition, which also includes their belief in the Messiah, the hidden Imam, who will appear and establish the Kingdom of God on earth. The Shiites also observe a strong cult of martyrdom. These two main trends in Islam (but mainly Shiism) are further broken up and intermingled with various sects.

According to their holy book — the Koran — the Muslims must look upon themselves as slaves of Allah and their lives must be spent in constant service of God. Everything in life must begin with the name Allah and be for Allah.

From this basic tennet in Islamic religion emanated a very complex system of ceremonies to which belongs the reading of the Koran (the Koran has to be in every household and every believer should care for it as a relic even though he does not know how to read), five prayers are said each day accompanied by prescribed bows and lowering the face all the way to the ground.

There are also fasts, the giving of alms, pilgrimages, observing various holidays, and so on. Pilgrimages to Mecca and Medina (Hadj) should be made at least once in the lifetime of a believer.

As Christians observe Sundays and the Jews Saturdays as holy days the Muslims observe Fridays and on this day it is necessary to visit the mosque for prayers which differ from those said on ordinary days.

The greater part of the population of Afghanistan (90%) belongs to the Muslim Sunnite branch, the Hanifite (more liberal) side. There are also about one million Shiites in the country and a smaller group of believers in Ismailism. After the Soviet Union gave military aid to Afghanistan enemy propaganda immediately began to misuse the Islamic faith of the Afghans and frighten the people that the godless Marxists and the Afghan revolutionary government would suppress Islam.

Nothing is further from the truth even though it is necessary to recall that atheism and anti-religious ideas are nothing foreign even to Muslim countries. The famed Tadjik-Persian poet and philosopher Omar Khayyam asked long ago: "What good comes from incense and the lights of mosques? What good is it to talk about Heaven and Hell?" Omar Khayyam wrote that all religions deceive people and the spirit of slavery is hidden in the Kaaba and the ringing of bells is the language of slaves.

Another Arab philosopher Ibn Rushd (Averroës) recognized the existence of God, but refused the teaching of the creation of the world by God. He recognized first of all the natural laws, which even God could not change, and refused faith in miracles and revelations.

Marxism-Leninism teaches that already from

the time of slavery religion reflects and defends exploitation ties and appears as an instrument of the spiritual oppression of the working man. Marx and Engels, however, drew attention to the fact that liquidation of religion cannot be carried out by forbidding it, not even after victory of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and that the attempt to forbid religion would only strengthen it and its servants would be enhanced by haloes of martyrdom.

Lenin was for the separation of the church from the state and he held to the idea that religion must be a private matter, meaning that everyone can choose his religion according to his wish — or he can be an atheist.

These principles today still apply in the Soviet Union where religion is carefully respected. The Islamic delegation which visited the Asian part of the USSR could see that for themselves. In Afghanistan Islam is fully recognized, as are other religions. This is shown not only in a number of official government speeches but also in the behaviour of several representatives of the Afghan state who visit mosques. Respect for Islam is obvious also from the international relations of Kabul with other Islamic countries.

WOMAN AND THE FAMILY

Woman has always played an esteemed role in the life of the Afghan tribal family, as mother — the preserver of the lineage. However, on the other hand, the husband more or less treated her worse than a slave.

For many centuries, according to the old Muslim custom, Afghan women from the age of twelve covered their faces with a veil. They usually got married between the age of fourteen and sixteen, but there are no few cases where a girl was married at the age of nine or ten. It was not until recently that girls, especially in larger towns, began to marry when they were around twenty years old.

In Afghanistan until recent times men were permitted to have more than one wife and it was common for richer men to have four or five, provided they had the money with which to buy and keep them. Before the law forbidding polygamy was passed (after the April Revolution in 1978) the average price for a bride was around ten thousand afghanis (approximately 300 dollars), sometimes it was more, sometimes less. For a girl who knew how to skilfully weave the traditional patterned wool carpets, a bridegroom sometimes even had to pay two million afghanis, which only a man from the richest class could afford. This way of selecting a bride was logically advantageous for parents who had more daughters than sons.

Such commercial marriage arrangements led to a small number of Afghans owning several wives while poorer men either never married or had to wait to marry until later in life when they had saved up enough money to buy at least one wife.

Richer parents often looked for brides or bridegrooms for their children when they were only five or six years old, and even as soon as a child was born. Already many years before the marriage was to take place people used to come to terms over the price of a bride. On the bridegroom's side, to a certain extent, it was a risky step to take, but then parents were sure and knew how much their son's bride would cost. On the other hand, the bride and bridegroom saw each other for the first time on the day of the wedding, and whether they liked it or not they had to accept the arrangement their parents had made. Under no circumstances could they go against their parents' wishes. This tradition is followed still today in many families, especially in backward places in the countryside.

Marriage in Afghanistan can be dissolved by death or divorce. Up until recently it was sufficient for a man to make a declaration prescribed by the Shariat three times, and the marriage ceased to exist. Today the decision of a court is necessary. Formally both husband and wife can make the request for a divorce, but in reality only men do it and that happens very seldom.

The birth of a child is a great occasion in the life of an Afghan family and especially if it is a boy. In this case it is announced all around the village by beating drums and shooting of guns.

During the first days after the birth of a child no one, with the exception of the family, is al-

lowed to see it, and the mother cannot even leave the home. Then the traditional ceremonies begin, such as the "gahvarabandan" — placing the child for the first time in the cradle and giving it a name. The mother invites women and children from the neighbourhood and in front of everybody she reads prayers and incense is burned around the cradle. Then the mother hands the baby to the midwife, who places it in the cradle. The next step is for the mother to sit beside the cradle feeding the child at her breast. Then she places a thin slice of Afghan bread in her mouth and at this moment the liveliest of the boys present leaps towards her and snatches the bread from her mouth and runs out into the street with all the other children following and trying to get the bread and take it back to the midwife. According to legend the further the boy runs with the bread the longer the child will live. When the children return home the mother and midwife give them sweets and small change, after which refreshments are offered.

This ceremony takes place in Afghan families very often. Most women give birth to twelve to fourteen children in their lifetime, but on average only five live to adulthood. The others usually die from a number of children's diseases or undernourishment during the first five years of life. Even the average life span of an Afghan woman is only 35 years which means that almost every year of her married life she gives birth to a child.

Afghan women revolutionaries, who for many years have led the difficult fight against their feudal prejudices, have had to overcome great obstacles e. g. there was a united front of the majority of men who did not want to lose their precedence; on the other hand these women

could not even count on the understanding of the ordinary Afghan woman. Thanks to nearly one hundred per cent illiteracy and almost complete isolation from the world, they could not mutually communicate or work with them. Even so the membership of the Democratic Organization of Women of Afghanistan (DOWA) established in 1965, has increased and this is due mostly to women students whose parents were better off and more enlightened and so they enabled their daughters to receive an education.

Many of them were imprisoned for their brave activities not only before the April Revolution in 1978, but also after September 1979 when Hafizullah Amin murdered the first people's democratic president of Afghanistan N. M. Taraki and installed the bloody government of oppression and illegality. Many who stood in the way of Amin found themselves behind bars and among them were a good number of progressive women activists in the DOWA. Even Comrade Surayya, and the present-day chairwoman of this organization A. Rathebzad, suffered torture in Amin's jails. For 17 days the latter underwent the most horrible methods of torture known as her jailors demanded to know where other leading members of the organization could be found. She did not give them this information but she paid for her silence with her health. After her release in December 1979 she had to undergo four serious operations in order to regain her health. She at least regained her freedom, unlike many of her fellow fighters who paid the supreme price. According to Amin's plan, Comrade Surayya was supposed to be liquidated and along with many other victims pushed by a bulldozer into a mass grave behind the walls of the Pouli Charkhi prison, but fortunately this plan was foiled by the arrival of the liberators.

With the coming of the new party and state leadership headed by Babrak Karmal, it was the women who were among the first to rejoin the fight against illiteracy, feudal prejudices and overall backwardness in the country. However, even in this second stage of the April Revolution their efforts were not without the cost of further lives. Many young women, teachers, party activists who voluntarily went out into the countryside to spread learning and the truth about the revolution were brutally murdered. They fell into the hands of bandits, armed men striving for the return of the old order and the preservation of their feudal privileges.

Young Afghan women, however, refused to be put aside in their fight against bands of cut-throats penetrating into their homeland from abroad. In one of the districts of Kabul there is a training camp for paratroop units composed exclusively of women — members of the DOWA. The training is rugged and nothing is overlooked to make them real paratroopers. Like other women's units this, too, has already won respect from the enemy, and some captured bandits have stated that they try to avoid these women.

THE LAW OF HONOUR

The Pashtun tribes are known even beyond their borders for their strict respect for the law of honour of the Afghan — Pashtunvalai, according to which members of these tribes are obliged to offer asylum to all who seek it, to offer aid to those who need it and even hospitality to their hated enemies. On the other hand, for any injury done to them they pay back in kind.

There is an old legend according to which the Sultan Mahmud Ghaznevi went out to hunt. On seeing a beautiful gazelle he took a sharp arrow, placed it in his bow and shot it into the animal's body. As it started to run away the Sultan gave chase on his fast horse. Gradually the graceful gazelle's strength gave out from loss of blood and it headed for the tent of a nomad. The Sultan happily jumped from his horse in order to claim his prize and take it away but there was a surprise in store for him. The simple shepherd stood in front of his tent and blocked the way. In anger the Sultan cried out, "Who are you and what does this mean? Out of my way, or you will become the son of Death!"

"Don't be angry, my lord," answered the shepherd. "I cannot allow you to go into my tent. The injured animal ran into my tent with the belief that I would help him. Now he is under my roof and tradition calls for me to protect him. . ."

"But, do you know who I am," shouted the Sultan. "I am Mahmud, ruler of this land, and everyone must obey my orders."

"No matter who you are," replied the shepherd, "tradition cannot be ignored. You may take my best ram in place of the gazelle, but I cannot allow you to hurt the animal while it is under my roof. If you really are the ruler of this land, then you above all are bound to honour our traditions and customs."

The Sultan was so impressed that he got back on his horse and left with all his followers empty handed.

A man whose honour or life is in danger can have resort to "nenavata". He can go to the home of an influential person and refuse to sit on the carpet or partake of hospitality until his request has been heard or until he has received a ceremonial promise that he will later be given aid. The honour of a man who will not listen to such a request, or of one who does not later fulfil his promise, will forever be tainted.

Afghan women, according to tradition, have their way of requesting help in an emergency. An Afghan woman takes off her black veil which covers her head and most of her body and sends it to her husband, brother or friend with a request for help. It is unheard of to refuse to such a request.

KABUL

The traveller who is at least slightly acquainted with the history of Afghanistan and its capital city, Kabul, already on the way from the airport will recall that history was made here. At the beginning of the 16th century King Babur, (Tiger), came here as a conqueror and established the new city of Kabul.

But long before that caravans from India travelled through this area carrying gold, jewels, spices and fragrant ointments on their way to the west through the Kabul valley where they encountered other caravans laden with furs from Central Asia or silk from China.

Today, Kabul is a fast growing city, where modern buildings are springing up beside bazaars which have not changed since the city was founded. It lies within a ring of mountains sparkling with white snow in the winter sun, emerald green in spring and in summer scorched to a greyish brown.

Two rugged mountain ridges crowned by old strongholds and fortifications reach down to the city through which the Kabul River flows. There are a number of legends connected with its name. The Avesta and Rig-Veda sacred writings mention the river Karbha, Ptolemy speaks of the city of Kabura, the metropolis of the Kabolites on the River Kofen and in ancient Persian documents it appears as Kapul.

... still another story in which the founder of the new Kabul, Babur claims that the one who really established the city was Cain whose tomb he is supposed to have visited after his arrival in Kabul. It is said to be in the garden south of Bala Hisar in the place called Shuhad-ayi Salehin.

The key to the secret is hidden rather in the name itself — “Kah” (Ka) means straw and “pul” means bridge. According to legend, the Kabul valley of long ago was a big lake in the middle of which there was a beautiful island where a musician lived an idyllic life. A king whose name is unknown decided to visit the island and because the water prevented him from reaching it he had a bridge made by weaving together a great quantity of straw and thus he was able to reach his goal. The king liked the island so well that he founded a city there and gave it the name Straw Bridge (Kahpul). Even today there are still marshes around Kabul (in Kalayi Ashmatkhan and Chamani Vazirabad) which gives weight to this version.

Another explanation, which is less poetic, refers to the fame of Kabul’s bazaars and their attractive goods which made a person lose money (pul also means money) as if it were straw (kah).

Architects from as far away as Bucharra were invited to beautify Kabul. From the time of Babur, the founder of the Mughal dynasty and the new capital, there are memorial gardens in Kabul which are now part of the Zarnagar Park in the centre of the city. A little mosque stands there for the exclusive use of the “hafizes” — the mullahs, Islamic priests who are so well trained that they can recite the whole Koran from memory.

On the edge of the Zarnagar Park there used to be a wooden building erected on posts in the

water which served the royal court as a storage place for sweets. It was the custom to give each outstanding visitor a cone of sugar or nuts or almonds dipped in sugar. Because there were many guests no court was without an extensive storage place. This custom is still observed today. No home in Kabul is without a bowl of sweets for guests, including almonds dipped in white sugar.

Bala Hisar, towering over the city, served Afghan rulers as a government seat until it was destroyed at the time of the second Anglo-Afghan war. The new citadel, the present-day House of the People, has replaced Bala Hisar. Chilsutun Castle is similarly situated in expansive gardens. Its name (forty pillars) explains why it is described as a “Greek temple surrounded by columns.”.

In this former summer castle of the Afghan rulers the first press conference held by Babrak Karmal took place after the installation of the second stage of the revolution.

Times are changing even in Kabul.

FROM REPORTAGES OF CZECHOSLOVAK JOURNALISTS

Meetings With Three Children

Eyes

I remember them even today . . . big, dark, perplexed . . . they belonged to fourteen-year-old beautiful Khalida. There was everything in them — poverty, hunger, sadness and hopelessness, but also faith, longing and calmness . . . this Afghan girl told me her story.

She lived with her parents on the outskirts of Kabul . . . four brothers and sisters, her mother and father . . . One of the families who belonged to the richer class only because the father was employed by a foreigner. Their "wealth" had only one aspect — security that they had somewhere to go to work the next day and the family did not have to go hungry. And the substance of this "wealth"? The children did not have to run around barefooted like hundreds of other children.

But then, the younger brother became ill with a serious child's disease which required ever more medicines and the father was unable to get them. "There could have been one more of us," sighed Khalida, and in the words "could have been" there sounded a quiet reproach — if . . .

Only then Khalida began to understand the contradictions which her eyes could long before have noticed. On the one side modern Kabul — handsome villas where the really rich and powerful lived, cinemas in which she had never

been, hotels whose interiors she had never seen and the post office whose services she had never been able to use. Her eyes began to see the beauty around her in a slightly different light. They did not want merely to accept that some people were riding in cars, but to ask: what kind of people are they? The question kept recurring: Why? Why they and not us — why must my whole family and I share one bicycle? In time the "why's" began to accumulate and gradually there was added — because. After some four years the original timid longing for a way out of this charmed circle turned into the conviction that there was a way. No, Khalida did not want to go around the shops full of all kinds of enticing goods, she did not even want to "steal" water for watering the only mulberry tree which grew in front of their clay hut. Khalida is at the age when girls get married — she does not want to be sold; she will choose her own future husband herself.

Her big eyes widened as she expressed this thought. No, Khalida will not walk with a bowed head but will stand straight and look ahead and live like a human being . . .

Hands

In the car it was stifling hot, but in the capital 200 kilometres to the west snow was falling and the thermometer showed no more than five degrees Centigrade. Here in Jalalabad they are just beginning to harvest the oranges. A pleasant breeze occasionally blew into the car. We draw to a halt.

A shadow fell across the seat and a small child's hand was thrust through the window.

"Lady, baksheesh . . ."

The open palm covered with callouses, cracked, dry skin, dirty, begs a few coins for its

owner. The little boy with eyes blue as the sky stands and looks beseechingly at me. He couldn't be more than twelve.

"Why are you begging?" I asked as I gave him some money.

"There are many of us at home and we haven't anything to eat." He was silent for a moment and then he added, "It brings in quite a lot..." and he lowered his eyes.

Something about the child made me uneasy, then suddenly I was aware of what it was... his hands! A person has two hands... right... left. But the boy at the car window didn't have a left hand. Instead there was only a stump ending just below the elbow. An accident perhaps?

He noticed my glance and smiled sadly.

"That's my livelihood. My father had it cut off. They always give something to cripples. It makes people more sympathetic... My father was right. He also begs, and I bring home more than he does..."

With horror I averted my glance. The misfortune of that little boy knows no boundary. He is condemned forever... and even if he wanted he can never work as a healthy person does.

He saw that I was upset and wanted to go.

"Wait! How did it happen?"

"It's difficult for me to talk about it. A year ago I went to work for the first time. I wanted to work on a construction site, at least one day. Only... there were many of us... even younger than I. An agent who was doing the hiring came along and one after another he felt our muscles. That was to find out if we could endure the work for a whole day. I was lucky and was taken on for one day. I couldn't wait until evening. It was tiring work and I looked forward to my first day's pay. Before I left the agent came again and gave me half of my pay —

I never saw the other half — it was supposed to be his share for taking me on. He said I should be glad that he had chosen me and if I didn't like it then I needn't come back the next day. In the evening my father was very angry and my fate was decided. His friend advised him to have my hand cut off. If my hands couldn't make a living, then I had to make it in another way. No one asked if I agreed..."

The last words were said in a whisper. Then the boy raised his eyes to mine. He lowered them in a farewell, "Thanks..."

He left my car, but in a little while he was standing by another and I heard, "Sahib, bak-sheesh..."

The Orange

The little town of Istalif is famed for its ceramics and handwoven carpets. Viewed from the road it is a very picturesque place — perhaps no other town in the country has so much greenery. However, the closer one gets to it the more he is convinced how wrong the first impression is... little winding rubbish-filled streets, dirt and mud in the winter — in summer dust. But behind the walls of the little houses beautiful things are made which are sold in the capital for good prices to decorate the palaces and handsome villas of the rich.

On the widest street stood a donkey weighed down with a sack of fruit. The street vendor was offering oranges for sale to passersby. The halved fruit looked enticing with its juicy red inside and my mouth watered. I couldn't resist. I bought one, the biggest and most beautiful. Beside me stood two children. A girl about fifteen years old held a little five-year-old boy by the hand. The little one tugged at his partner and begged,

"I want one, too!"

"I know, but we can't afford one. I don't have any money."

I saw the sad eyes and the immense longing.

"I want one so much. I never had one like that..."

I began to peel my orange, but my hands seemed to stop by themselves. I didn't hesitate long and put my juicy orange in the dirty little hands.

The big innocent eyes brightened with exquisite childish delight.

"Thank you, I'll put it away and share it with my brother. He has never had one either. He'll be surprised."

He turned and scuttered away into one of the very poor little houses. In a little while he came back and gave me a beautiful plate. His father came after him and with all seriousness offered me his hand and started to speak. He wouldn't hear of my paying for his work. I felt his grateful look for a long time and was happy that I had given such pleasure to the little fellow and his Daddy.

I had these experiences in Afghanistan more than ten years ago during the reign of the king. Hunger, poverty, those were words which belonged to the vocabulary of the Afghan children, just as to our children belong words like radio, television, toys and telephone. Only a few of those children could attend schools, make use of the benefits of medical science, and at the age of ten it was unheard of for them to enjoy carefree play.

The revolutionary changes in this country therefore first of all influenced the lives of these future workers, farmers, students and engineers — in short, children became the great treasure

of this poor country which now gives them perspectives and possibilities without fear for the future.

I don't know what happened to Khalida, nor what that crippled boy in Jalalabad is doing. I know only that they are no longer children and that they have very sad memories of their childhood. I also know that now all Afghan children can buy that most beautiful orange.

THE SPIRIT OF THE AFGHAN REVOLUTION

Light is Penetrating Darkness

"... They (the representatives of revolutionary organs) tried to open a school for girls in our village and sent us a teacher from Kabul. We don't want our women to have an education. . . " said one of the so-called ordinary insurgents at the beginning of 1980 to a reporter for the American newspaper *The Christian Science Monitor*. It is typical, as the American journalist said, that this man, like most of his fellow fighters, cannot read or write.

The western mass media in the summer of this year published a photo of two captured teachers, kneeling and with eyes blindfolded. After the American reporter had photographed them they were shot by counter-revolutionaries. These were not the only teachers to be executed by reactionary bands. There were tens of such teachers, maybe today they number in the hundreds, working in the campaign against illiteracy. The counter-revolution murders because it fears its great enemy — literacy, the education of the broad masses of the Afghan people.

I passed through the gates into the extensive campus of Kabul University. After a few steps a voice from behind called to me. I turned. A young man in civilian shirt and trousers very close by aimed a machine gun at me. In a short while others appeared. There were five guards...

students, protecting the school area, members of the Democratic Organization of the Youth of Afghanistan (DOYA).

Students with Weapons in Their Hands

I met the boys and girls belonging to DOYA in the spring of 1980, and several other times in Kabul, and not only in schools. I came upon armed guards of the national militia which was made up for the most part of young men, students and workers at the Kabul factories, in the narrow streets of the bazaars where they maintained peace and order and made it impossible for the counter-revolutionaries to carry out their work of destruction.

It is the main task of the armed students to protect their teachers, fellow students and school buildings from bandits, which is a difficult and demanding role for them to perform. While before the April Revolution in 1978 there were 800 schools in Afghanistan, in the following two years a further six hundred schools were established in towns and the most remote corners of the country. However, within the period of one year bands of counter-revolutionaries maintained and supported by the USA had destroyed and burned 1100 of them.

Naturally, this caused problems in school attendance. Before the revolution only 12 to 15 per cent of the children attended school, but today the number has substantially increased; but because of terrorist activities and the psychological pressure of backward elements still more than one-half of the children are unable to go to school regularly and learn to read, write and count.

It is not by chance that schools, pupils, students and teachers are the target of the most vigorous attacks of reaction. Not so long ago

this country was one of the poorest in the world and 90 per cent of the pre-April Revolution Afghans were illiterate — the number was even higher among women: 97 per cent. It was illiteracy, the complete lack of informed people in the villages cut off from the towns by high mountains, that helped the big landowners to hold the peasants in absolute submission. The only source of information for ordinary Afghans concerning events in their country and the world were the mullahs, the interpreters of religious law who, however, in most cases were willing helpers of the feudal lords and landowners.

After the revolution many things began to change quickly and news from Kabul about the new life, freedom from slavery in the big landowners' fields began to reach the distant mountain villages. The bearers of this news, in most cases, were teachers, students and revolutionary party activists. Many people began to realize how much they had been deceived in the past.

A real battle began for opening up the minds of the people, the majority of whom were faithful believers in Islam. The counter-revolution began to physically liquidate messengers of the revolutionary changes who had set out on an extremely difficult path. Even after many defects the enemy refused to give up. The stream of misinformation and malicious slander spread through the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan by foreign mass media is addressed to specific groups of people among whom the students are in first place. They are the future of this country; in a few years they will be engineers, teachers, doctors, journalists, leaders of farm cooperatives; they will administer the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan. And this is why there is such unusual interest of

reaction and foreign ideological diversion centres in this group of Afghans.

The youth of the Afghan revolution have not always known how to distinguish and differentiate the good from the false, the truth from lies and slander; but most of the young Afghans have already discovered the truth and have joined in the struggle for its defence, even with arms as do the boys and girls of the Democratic Organization of the Youth of Afghanistan. They are concerned with events in their country and they show an interest in their colleagues who, purposely or by mistake, have found themselves on the other side of the barricades. At a mass meeting which took place in 1980 at Kabul University they categorically rejected the false imperialist propaganda. In a resolution passed at the close of the meeting they condemned the attempts of the enemies of the revolution to deceive the Afghan people, especially students, and to get them go against the state, against the new revolutionary leadership.

The counter-revolution is not desisting, it continues to murder and terrorize. Nevertheless, it lacks sufficient strength to completely stop the great campaign for literacy and education which reached the second stage after the changes in December 1980 in the top positions of party and state leadership.

On the streets of towns and villages I met children with their school bags and spelling books in their hands, books which were published for the first time in the history of Afghanistan in the languages of the minorities. There were also students with scripts and older people who are catching up with what former governments in Afghanistan made impossible for them.

The Second Phase of the Literacy Campaign
During the first phase, shortly after the victory of the April Revolution and mainly during the Amin regime there were many mistakes and infringements on the rights of others. "A plan was made to overcome the illiteracy of millions of people," explained the Minister of Education of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan Anahita Ratebzad. "And a goal was set which could not be realized — to liquidate illiteracy within five years. This, of course, led to uncontrollable haste, local offices in many cases even tried to force people to attend courses." However, this did not change things because the people were not convinced of the necessity and mainly the benefits of this campaign for themselves personally. They did not understand the idea of this decree.

In the past only three per cent of the women took part in this campaign and it actually was conducted only in towns. "We could not get the women, especially in the countryside, to take an interest in it," said Minister Anahita Ratebzad. "Now there are courses for women which are completely voluntary. People who learn to read and write are becoming willing propagators of the idea of the campaign against illiteracy."

Today, the whole country is taking part in this educational campaign which is drawing its second breath. A nation-wide commission for the fight against illiteracy has been created and its work is shared not only by employees of the Ministries of Education and Culture but also by people who are working in planning, agriculture and land reform and representatives of the Muslim clergy. It is not by chance that the members of the commission represent such a mosaic including church dignitaries. Unlike the Amin regime, the new revolutionary leader-

ship through many concrete deeds has shown that in carrying out social and economic reforms it fully respects the traditions of the Afghan people, their religious belief and way of life. For instance, one of the slogans of the propagators of the campaign against illiteracy says, "Learn! Only in this way will you yourselves be able to read the Koran."

The enemies of the April Revolution do not like to see the many ways in which the ties between church and the revolutionary leadership have improved. One of the attempts to interfere with these friendly relations was the provocation in Kabul when several bandits burnt all the religious literature they could find in the state bookshop and so that their provocation would be complete, on the very top of the big pyramid of burning books they threw hundreds of copies of the Koran.

The Scribes' Profession

Early one evening in 1980 when twilight was slowly fading, the spring breeze wafted over the city the call to evening prayer by the muezzins in the towers of Kabul's 446 mosques. In front of the main post office in the city centre the day-long rush slowly subsided. There were a few men packing up their papers, envelopes, pencils and pens and other items of the scribe's profession and putting their tables on little wagons. Many illiterate men and women had stood beside them during the day who had needed to write to their relatives or fill in a questionnaire, write a request and so on. Today the profession of scribe is still remunerative. The struggle against illiteracy has only just recently begun to bear fruit, but the time is not far off when these "scribes" will have to seek other kinds of employment. The demand for their services is al-

ready beginning to decline and when the last of them disappears from in front of the Kabul post-office it will be a true sign that the struggle against illiteracy has been successfully carried out.

Friendship road

How many thousands of years have the quiet waters of the Amu-Darya River been separating the Afghan tribes to the south from the desert plains of their great northern neighbour! Separated, that is, until December 1979 when a temporary pontoon bridge first joined the Soviet town of Termez with the Afghan border town of Hayratan. Half a year later I saw construction going ahead on a beautiful concrete bridge which by 1982 would have four lanes for motor traffic and one railway line in operation as well as space for oil and gas lines. This new communication will help further in the development of mutual trade and cooperation.

Convincing statistics concerning the dynamic growth of Afghan-Soviet cooperation were given by the director of the commercial harbour in Hayratan, Ali Ahmad Rezayi:

"Before the April Revolution some 150 to 200 thousand tons of goods passed through this harbour, but after the overthrow of the Daud regime in 1978 this volume more than doubled. In 1980 the plan for one million tons was surpassed. It must be remembered that Hayratan is not the only northern entrance to the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan. Several tens of kilometres up the river lies Sherkan a similar commercial harbour. A third entrance is the overland transfer station for the trade route between the USSR and Afghanistan in Turghundi in the northwestern spur of the DRAI"

Thirty years ago it often took two days to bring supplies from the banks of the Amu-Darya

to Kabul. Another route led through the Hindu Kush mountain chain but it was not a very good one. Still more difficult, however, was the route travelled by the ambassadors of peace and friendship who, shortly after the proclamation of independence of Afghanistan in February 1919, were commissioned by the enlightened King Ammanullah to carry a message of good will and friendship to Lenin. Their journey from Kabul to Moscow took all of five months and most of the time was spent travelling through the Shibar Pass in the Hindu Kush Mountains at an altitude of 2,987 metres. Still today this is the only road joining Kabul with the northern provinces.

But the situation was not much easier for the Soviet representatives who were sent in 1921 as the first foreign diplomatic mission to Afghanistan. Although they chose to travel in the summertime the journey across Afghan territory took two whole months.

Today powerful lorries travel the four hundred kilometre distance between Hayratan and the Afghan metropolis in less than a day, but it is not entirely due to the powerful motors of modern lorries. At the end of the 1950s the complete rebuilding of a 260-kilometre section of this road through mountains, valleys and narrow passes was begun, so that now it has far fewer dangerous curves, but more tunnels, bridges and tens of kilometres of huge retaining walls. However, backward Afghanistan would hardly have been able to accomplish this demanding task alone. A request for assistance was sent to Moscow which resulted in the Soviet Union bearing the main burden of securing material and machinery for the construction. Soviet experts prepared complete plans and at the same time they were in charge of the whole project. It

is natural then that this outstanding highway bears the appropriate name: Friendship Road, which the people bestowed on it while it was still under construction.

The fact is that its construction was brought about by unfriendly acts against independent Afghanistan. In 1955 the Islamabad government used the disagreements between Afghanistan and Pakistan over Pushtunistan and unilaterally forbade any kind of export and import of Afghan goods from harbours on the Indian Ocean through Pakistan territory. This was an obvious act of extortion of the Afghan government, which refused to join in the so-called Baghdad Pact (CENTO), which came into existence at that time.

However, something happened which few people in the world counted on. In June of the same year a transit agreement was signed between the USSR and Afghanistan by which the latter country gained the right of free and duty-free transportation of all kinds of goods over the territory of the Soviet Union. Then it was only a question of time until the Friendship Road could be completed and the agreement realized. Thus the attempt to establish an economic blockade of Afghanistan was doomed to failure.

The impertinent attack on the independence of Afghanistan also influenced its foreign commerce orientation: ninety per cent of the goods come to this harbour from the Soviet Union and ten per cent from other countries. Considerable space is occupied by containers from Japan, the USA and countries of western Europe and also by Czechoslovak Tatra and Škoda lorries, agricultural machinery, huge rolls of steel wire bearing the trade mark Vítkovice Iron and Steel Works, and containers full of a foamy beverage from Pilsen.

The Friendship Road today is a very important part of Afghanistan's road transportation system. This country has no railways and it is not even expected that any will be built in the near future and so all goods are transported on the three thousand kilometre hard surface roads of which seventy per cent have been built by Soviet constructors. There are, of course, many more roads without asphalt or concrete surfaces in this country, but it is difficult to travel on them in certain seasons of the year.

A Futile Prescription from Chile

After the April Revolution some forces beyond the borders of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan tried to make use of their experience from events in Chile in 1973. There, too, private lorry transportation was of key importance for the economy of the whole country. The Chilean transport drivers' strike had a very negative effect on the situation in the country and that was supposed to be repeated in Afghanistan. Over two thousand private owners of lorries went to Pakistan and remained there. This caused a dangerous paralysis of delivery of supplies for city populations and for production in many factories and workshops in Afghanistan.

However, Chile was not repeated. The speeding up of supplies by several hundred powerful lorries from the USSR and Czechoslovakia replaced the missing link in the economic life. At this time the Afghan-Soviet State Transport Association (AFSOTR) originated, which helped to defeat the realization of counter-revolutionary plans to starve the country.

Several times in October 1980, I went to places on the outskirts of Kabul where it had always been possible to rent a private lorry and again there was a large number of them avail-

able. Among the owners were those who some time before had voluntarily or forcefully emigrated to Pakistan. When the purpose of the strike was thwarted these lorry owners were sent back to Afghanistan so as not to compete with their Pakistan colleagues by charging lower transport rates.

"The Highway War"

When the counter-revolutionaries failed in their efforts to cause a transport drivers' strike they tried at all cost to damage the Afghan economy by terroristic attacks on auto convoys, individual lorries and civilian buses. Some of the mass media called it "The Highway War". Perhaps! The fact remains that most of the smaller groups of bandits operate mostly in the vicinity of main highway routes, and they still fire on columns of cars and buses. However, today they concentrate mainly on laying mines ranging from powerful anti-tank mines, time or pressure mines, mines operated by remote control and plastic mines which are very difficult to detect. Where did the bandits get them from? Where did they get all the other weapons and munitions . . . from their foreign protectors in the USA, Egypt, China and Pakistan. At one place on the Friendship Road we stopped beside a lorry that had just been wrecked. Soldiers had arrived and were examining the surrounding area and after a while they discovered two more mines hidden in the gravel on the side of the road. According to the inscription on top, one of them was made in a factory in China, while the other, a plastic mine detector, also did not bother to conceal its origin. It was clearly written: Mine ATK nondetectable. . . that is, an American product. However, the bandits also use smaller, but just as dangerous home made

mines which they learn to produce from their foreign instructors in Pakistan camps.

There is a complete collection of such home made mines on display in Kabul and they range from those hidden in ordinary steel tubes to mines produced from cast iron frying pans and children's toys with dangerous explosives concealed inside. Such facts do not support the claim that these mines are destined only for soldiers.

Testimony of the American Press

The American weekly *Time* correctly wrote, "the insurgents are terrorizing even the civilian population," and it vividly supports this by examples. "The rebels stopped a bus going from Kabul to Jalalabad and on the spot they shot every man who refused to join them. In this way," *Time* explains, "the rebels secure live manpower for themselves."

West of Jalalabad the rebels stopped two West German camions coming from India and blew them up. When the *Time* correspondent asked why they attacked Europeans from friendly countries, one of the leaders of the counter-revolution in Peshawar replied, "If the camion is stopped by fighters who know how to read they control the passports, and if an illiterate person stops the camion, they simply shoot..."

The correspondent of the British bourgeois newspaper *Daily Mail*, B. Norris, who has visited numerous parts of the DRA, saw many "memorials" of bandits' attacks — telegraph poles cut down, upturned and burned cars. "The driver of one of these, an Austrian, was killed and two of his colleagues were robbed. The motive for such acts can only be robbery," said B. Norris.

The Economic Situation in Afghanistan

While most of Afghanistan is mountainous, dry and rocky, there are numerous lowlands and valleys which are fertile and produce a good yield of fruit, vegetables and grain. The cultivation of cotton is also being extended. Sheep raising is traditional and the wool and skins are among the main export articles.

Afghanistan has rich sources of raw materials, which, however, are used thus far to a small extent. Among the domestic industrial products are woollen goods, soap, leather, matches, carpets, spices and dried fruit. There are many artisans' workshops in the country which make leather and jewelry products, stone and metal utensils, embroidery and textiles.

There are no railways in Afghanistan and so road construction and the development of motor transport play a decisive role. The Soviet Union has helped to build over 2,500 kilometres of roads.

At the present time the Afghan economy has been greatly damaged by subversive acts of internal and foreign reaction and Amin's harmful policies. The financial system was almost wrecked under Amin, commerce stagnated and the prices of food and other products quickly rose. A large part of the farm land remained uncultivated. Its area was reduced by eight per cent and farm production decreased by more than half a million tons.

Amin's persecution paralyzed economic activity in the villages and interrupted connections between the countryside and towns. His intervention into the private sector broke up commercial activity and caused domestic business to take an unfriendly position towards the revolution which, just after the April Revolution, when foreign trade associations ceased to

exist, should have offered broader possibilities.

The government of Babrak Karmal received a cumbersome legacy. Among its numerous tasks was to restore the economic life and improve the economic situation. A decisive factor in this stage was the growth in economic cooperation between Afghanistan and the Soviet Union. Thanks to Soviet help the new state sector is the most stable and operates better than the private sector. The critical year of 1980 brought a decline in production in the state sector of 4.5 per cent, in the private sector it dropped 25 per cent. In the first half of 1981 the situation radically improved with private producers and businessmen showing the greatest increase.

Because as a result of revolutionary events, some capitalist and other countries limited economic help to Afghanistan the current share of assistance from the USSR and socialist countries accounts for eighty per cent of foreign economic aid.

Farmers outnumber any other category in the country, and the solution of agricultural problems remained the basic task of the Afghan revolution. The first stage of land reform pursued a discontented course and made more acute the class struggle in the countryside, which was exploited by reaction.

The second stage of land reform prepared by the Babrak Karmal government announced a programme of basic aims. It raised the purchase prices of the most important agricultural products and lowered the prices of chemical fertilizers and farm equipment. By means of unpaid help seed and chemical fertilizers will be supplied in the coming years by the Soviet Union.

Soviet experts are bringing to the country

modern agrotechnical methods and are restoring or modernizing irrigation systems.

The difficulties in 1980 lowered production of cotton and sugar beet processing enterprises and export, but here, too, thanks to substantially increased yields in 1981 the situation has improved.

Of the rich sources of raw materials the greatest use is being made so far only of natural gas, but thanks to Soviet and our own experts, further use of natural gas and oil deposits is being added. As a consequence of the counter-revolutionary chaos, coal mining was reduced from 220,000 tons in 1978 to 37,000 tons in the first half of 1979, but in the first half of 1981 it rose again to its original status.

Even with an important potential source of energy Afghanistan still has problems which may be bridged by the construction of electric power lines from the Soviet Union to Kabul. Along with several other socialist countries the USSR is helping Afghanistan with the construction of light and food processing industries.

In 1980 the state and mixed sectors' share of industrial production amounted to forty per cent.

An important part of the revolutionary programme is the reorganization of foreign trade a great part of which still falls into the private sector. So far state enterprises are concerned mainly with the import of machinery and equipment, oil products, chemical fertilizers, sugar, medicines and wheat. They have a monopoly on the export of natural gas and cotton.

There are also basic import organizations associating private businesses, which in the future will also engage in export. The Halk import and export organization established in 1978 operates with fifty-one per cent of state capital and it has

a monopoly on the import of cars, hunting weapons, dried milk, safety razors, radios, tape recorders and synthetic fibres.

The Soviet Union is the biggest trading partner of Afghanistan to which it exports oil products, cement, wheat and sugar, machinery and equipment. It imports from Afghanistan natural gas, cotton fibres, dried fruits and wool.

Within the framework of technological and economic cooperation between the USSR and Afghanistan there have so far been built seventy-one economic projects of which fifty-two operate with the help of Soviet experts. Among these projects are also two long distance highways, the Shindand airport and an irrigation complex in Jalalabad. Further planned constructions include extensive geological research, a factory for processing copper ore and a factory for the purification of sulphur, high tension power lines, the construction of bridges, crude oil reservoirs, and so on.

The Czechoslovak Socialist Republic and the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan are separated by more than six thousand kilometres. For some tens of years, however, close ties of friendship and mutually advantageous cooperation, which began soon after the end of the Second World War, have formed a firm bond between them. This was undoubtedly a successful period in the development of Czechoslovak-Afghan relations. The first steps on the way to the development of Czechoslovak-Afghan cooperation cover the period 1919 to 1929 when a leading role was played by our great engineering enterprises such as the Pilsen Škoda Works or the ČKD Works in Prague and others. Even during the period between the two World Wars a number of agreements were signed by our

the Afghan government for the construction of several larger industrial plants such as the very first sugar refinery in Baghlan in northern Afghanistan.

While for some years previously there was a fast development of trade, diplomatic ties between Czechoslovakia and Afghanistan were not established until the agreement on friendship between these two countries was signed in Paris on October 13, 1937. The dynamic growth of economic cooperation and trade exchanges corresponded to the raising of diplomatic representation of both countries in July 1960 to ambassadorial level.

The many-sided cooperation between monarchist Afghanistan and socialist Czechoslovakia after the Second World War became a good example of mutual advantage and the successful development of relations between countries with differing social systems. In the 1950s the first students from faraway Afghanistan began to attend our university schools, Czechoslovak experts and assembly workers shared importantly in the construction of cement works in Pul-i-Khumri and Jebel, in the modernization of coal mines and at that time preparations were made for the construction in Kabul of the first trolleybus lines in the country supplied completely by Czechoslovakia. At the same time our country became an important customer of traditional Afghan export items of raw materials and food such as quality long-life cotton, dried fruit and mainly when raw material on the world markets became even more expensive, and for our extensive leather and fur industries, indispensable — leathers and furs.

A new impulse for the development of advantageous cooperation between the two countries was the April Revolution in 1978.

Traditional trade is now expanding between Czechoslovakia and Afghanistan. Czechoslovakia is helping with the building of new electric power plants and the modernization of coal mines. It exports to Afghanistan machinery and equipment, trolleybuses, lorries, cranes, construction machinery and irrigation technology, while Afghanistan exports to Czechoslovakia flax seed, sesame, cotton, sheep skins, linen, raisins, nuts, carpets and artisans' products.

In June 1981 Babrak Karmal said in an interview for *Rudé právo*: "Czechoslovakia now holds a leading place among our foreign trade partners immediately after the Soviet Union. . . ." Not long before, the Minister of Trade of the DRA had said, "We have raw materials and Czechoslovakia has the necessary technology. This forms a good basis for mutually interesting and fruitful cooperation." Proof of the timeliness of these words is, for example, the establishment of a joint Czechoslovak-Afghan trade production association, AFKARA, within the framework of which Czechoslovakia is building in the DRA a modern plant for the processing of leathers, furs and fur products some of which will be used by Afghanistan to pay off credit advanced by Czechoslovakia for the building of the plant. This is only one of the many examples of the new forms of mutually advantageous cooperation.

The culmination of relations between Czechoslovakia and Afghanistan thus far was the visit to Czechoslovakia of a Party and Government delegation of the DRA at the end of June 1981. The delegation was led by the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan and Chairman of the Presidium of the Revolutionary Council of the DRA Babrak Karmal. During the visit a new

Agreement on Friendship and Cooperation was signed, thus culminating the developments achieved in relations between the two countries.

The agreement is an important document which emanates from the strongest conviction of the vital importance of the unity of all revolutionary forces and cooperation of socialist and developing countries. The Agreement on Friendship and Cooperation is rightly held therefore also to be of great international importance, which is elevated yet higher in the face of the increased aggressiveness of global imperialism. Concrete proof of such aggression is the overt hegemonistic pressure in the sphere of southwest Asia and the undeclared war which is being waged against the Afghan revolution.

CONCLUSION

The path of revolutionary changes has never been smooth especially in countries which had to pass over several centuries, and among them is the present-day Democratic Republic of Afghanistan. Undoubtedly the revolutionary struggle against backward forces will still take a long time.

Afghanistan is indeed a mountainous country with very few road networks and highways. It is completely without railway lines and its fast mountain rivers cannot be used for transportation. Therefore progress in the thousands of distant and forgotten corners of this bewitchingly beautiful land in the arms of the Hindu Kush Mountains has made only slight headway.

Backwardness of the Middle Ages, fanatical religious belief, poor villagers, almost one hundred per cent illiteracy, traditional obedience to feudal lords and tribal chiefs — these are the main allies of reactionary counter-revolutionary forces. However, progressive elements in Afghanistan are well aware of them and that is why they aim their politico-organizational activities against them and try to elevate the ordinary Afghans.

Now the Afghan revolution is entering the second stage of the struggle for a better tomorrow in this country in the heart of Asia. It is building a new life but at the same time, with

weapons in its hands, it must defend the revolutionary achievements against forces sent to the DRA from abroad. No doubt the time will come when the Afghan comrades will be able to announce the third "peace stage".

Thousands of experienced revolutionaries and young enthusiastic fighters for the just cause of the Afghan people will be able to take off their military uniforms and lay aside their weapons. They will become engaged in a new stage which will be less dangerous to life but much more complicated. This time, however, their concern will be the building of modern industry and agriculture in a country in which time seemed to have stopped many centuries ago.

Those people are mistaken who think that Afghanistan has nothing but mountains. The Afghan soil is not very fertile and only to a limited extent can it supply the food needs of the roughly sixteen million Afghans.

The country's real wealth, however, is hidden many hundreds of metres deep beneath the surface. It has extensive deposits of iron ore, oil, coal, gas, coloured metals, gold, asbestos and other raw materials, which are very much in demand. Today it is far from possible to determine exactly how extensive these deposits are because only a small part of the territory of Afghanistan has so far been geologically explored.

But already many rich deposits are known as well as places where giant hydroelectric power stations could be built in the deep mountain valleys to harness the great energy of waters which flow almost completely unused from the slopes of the Hindu Kush into the sea. Studies of how to use these sources have already been worked out but it is necessary to wait for their realization — maybe ten or even more years

when more powerful mechanisms will have been created, when new but yet unknown kinds of cheap energy will be available.

Under present conditions it would be very ineffective to use these deposits. The expense of building many hundreds of kilometres of roads in extremely difficult mountain terrain and the building of towns and factories in inhospitable regions high up in the mountains would require much greater investment than the value that could be gained from these raw materials. That applies today, but tomorrow the picture will certainly change.

All this does not mean, however, that Afghans can depend only on their mineral wealth hidden deep under the mountain massifs. The most valuable element which is sure to play an important role in the present stage of building the new developing society is the immeasurable diligence and notorious skill of the Afghan workers, artisans and farmers, who led by the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan with the help of fraternal socialist countries, will overcome in a historically short time the bitter legacy of feudal backwardness and will fearlessly enter on a new road to socialism and to the conversion of this not long ago specifically agrarian country into a modern industrially developing state.

CHRONOLOGICAL VIEW OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE STATE

1747	The first formation of the Afghan independent state, whose founder was Ahmad Khan Abdali (later: Ahmad Shah Durrani) elected king of the Afghans by a tribal assembly and who welded his people into a strong nation.
December 1838	First invasion by British colonial troops of the territory of present-day Afghanistan. The period of the battles until the British soldiers were driven out in October 1842 is called the First Anglo-Afghan War.
1878	Beginning of the Second Anglo-Afghan War, which ended in 1880.
July 27, 1880	British colonizing soldiers were annihilated in the little village of Maywand by patriotic units. The British nevertheless retained control of the foreign policy of the Afghan state.
February 28, 1919	The enlightened ruler Emir Ammanullah ascended the throne. Shortly thereafter he proclaimed full independence of Afghanistan and turned to Soviet Russia with a request for aid.

May 3, 1919	In response the British sent a 340 thousand strong expedition against Kabul which started the Third Anglo-Afghan War. However, this aggression was defeated and the English were forced to sign a truce.
April 7, 1919	Emir Ammanullah sent a peace mission to V. I. Lenin and M. A. Kalinin.
August 1919	In Rawalpindi a peace treaty was signed on the basis of which Afghan independence was proclaimed on August 19, 1919.
October 1919	In Moscow discussions began on the final wording of the Soviet-Afghan Agreement on Friendship.
September 13, 1920	Signing of the temporary Agreement on Friendship between Soviet Russia and Afghanistan.
February 28, 1921	The final version of the Agreement on Friendship between the two countries was signed in Moscow.
1955	The Kabul government refused to join the newly formed aggressive Baghdad Pact, which was sponsored by the USA. The reason was that American military aid to Pakistan endangered Afghan and Indian security.
1963	Enactment of the limited constitution.

January 1, 1965	Establishment of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan.
July 1973	Overthrow of the feudal monarchist regime of Zahir Shah who had ruled for forty years, and the assumption of leadership of the government of the new republic by Daud, the king's cousin.
April 27, 1978	Overthrow of the Daud regime and proclamation of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan.
December 5, 1978	Signing a new Afghan-Soviet Agreement on Friendship, Good Neighbourly Relations and Cooperation.
End of September 1979	Assassination of the first democratic Afghan president Nur Muhammad Taraki and the assumption of power by the Amin clique.
December 27, 1979	Hafizullah Amin was recalled from all party and state functions and condemned to the highest punishment by the Revolutionary Tribunal for his crimes. Babrak Karmal was elected to head the Central Committee of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan, the Revolutionary Council and the Government.

Afghanistan Yesterday and Today

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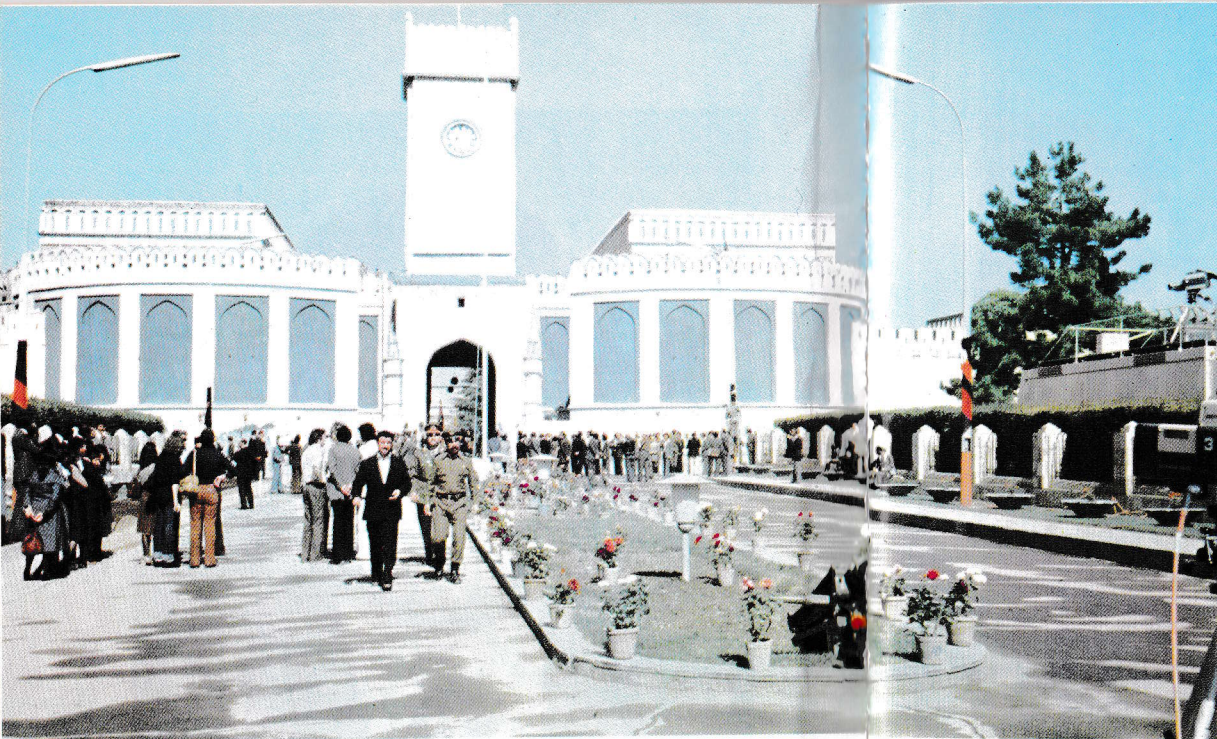
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Babrak Karmal, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan and Chairman of the Revolutionary Council of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan.



The former royal palace in Kabul is today the seat of the Revolutionary Council of the DRA. The photo shows the ceremonial raising of the state flag of the DRA in April 1981. The highest representative of the DRA, Babrak Karmal, has just completed a review of the guard of honour of the Afghan Armed Forces.

Young Afghans volunteer in great numbers for service in units of the Defenders of the Revolution.



Revolutionaries who fell in the fight against counter-revolutionary forces are buried on a low hill on the outskirts of Pul-i-Khmuri.





Comrades Gustáv Husák and Babrak Karmal — highest representatives of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic and the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan — sign an Agreement on Friendship and Cooperation between their two countries at Prague Castle.



The Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Czechoslovakia and the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan, Bohuslav Chřoupek and Shah Muhammad Dost, affix their signatures to the Agreement.



Winter in Afghanistan is short and snow comes unexpectedly. However, the glaciers on the slopes of the Hindu Kush Mountains do not thaw out even under the hot summer sun.

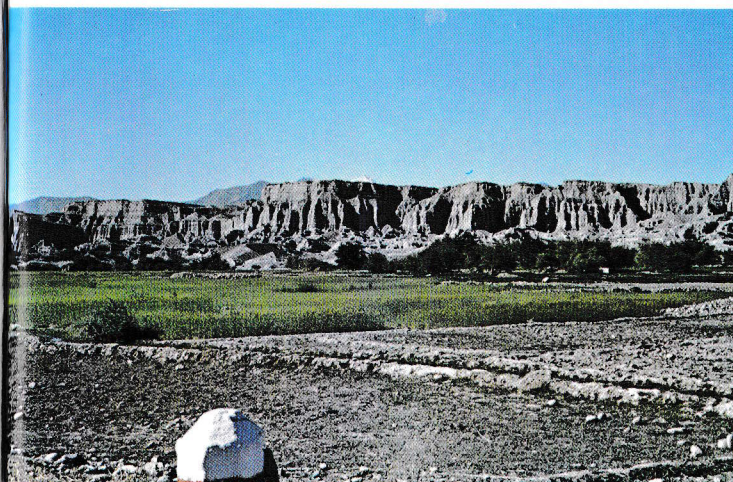
The Kabul River flows through the city of Kabul, capital of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan, and on through the Khyber Pass to the mouth of the Indus River.





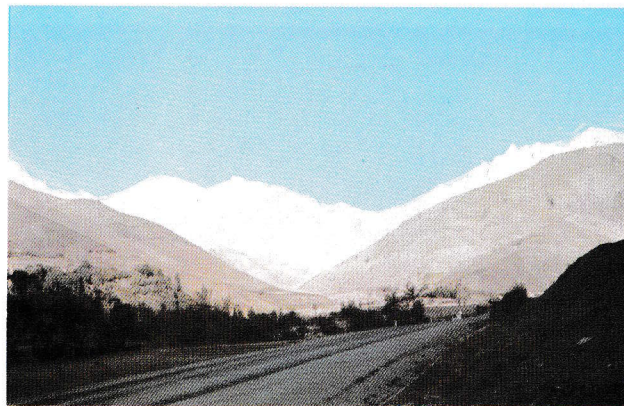
The valley below the Red City is one of the most beautiful and most fertile corners of Afghanistan.

The summer parched land and the rounded mountain peaks remind one rather of the surface of the moon than a fertile field. Nevertheless, Afghan soil produces a harvest three times a year.



Afghanistan is a mountainous country and so the green in the valleys always tells of the source of a rare liquid — water — which the Afghans value above all else

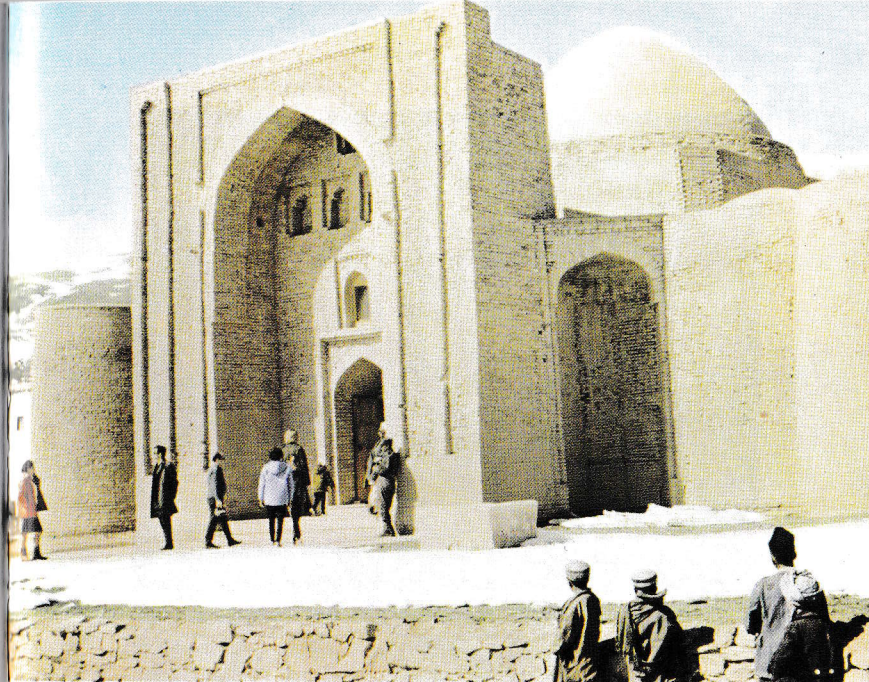
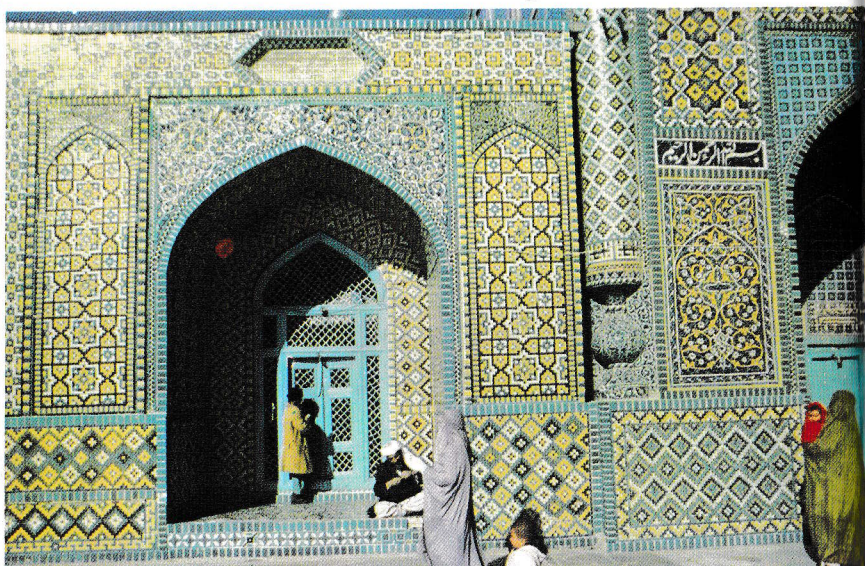
On the way north from Kabul one gets this view of the highest peaks of the snow capped Hindu Kush Mountains





The tomb of Emir Abdur Rahman

In front of the famed Razi-Sharif Mosque in the provincial town of Mazar-i-Sharif



For more than ten years the mosque in the provincial town of Ghazni has served as a museum housing exhibits of archeological findings of the old cultures of the province

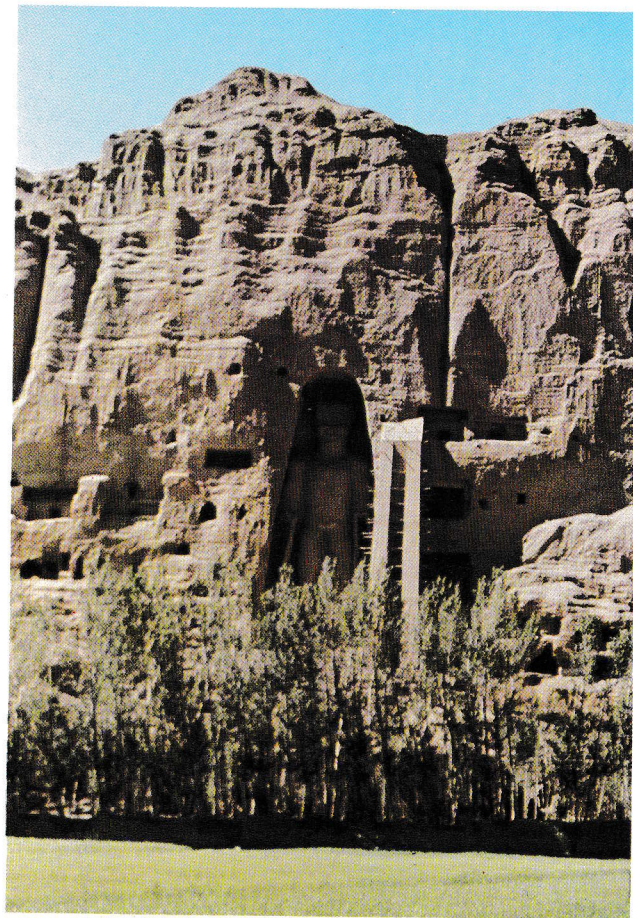
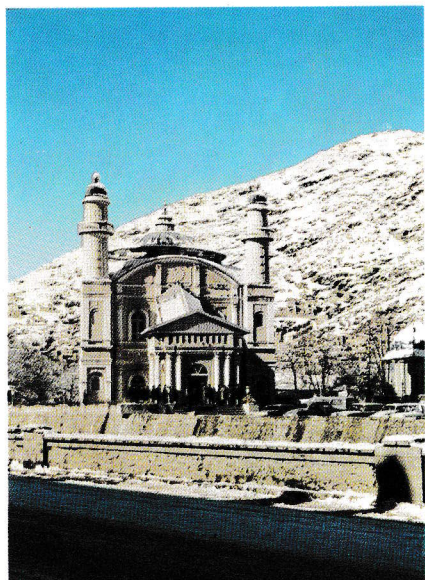
Today there are also some new buildings in the towns but they continue to preserve the character of the traditional little clay houses





Genghis Khan caused great damage seven hundred years ago plundering and pillaging the rich country under the Hindu Kush Mountains, supposedly to avenge an offence to his deputy. After a siege of long months this beautiful city to the north of Kabul which put up brave resistance was conquered and burnt to the ground. The colour of blood is recalled in the present-day name — Red City

The capital, Kabul, is a city of beautiful mosques

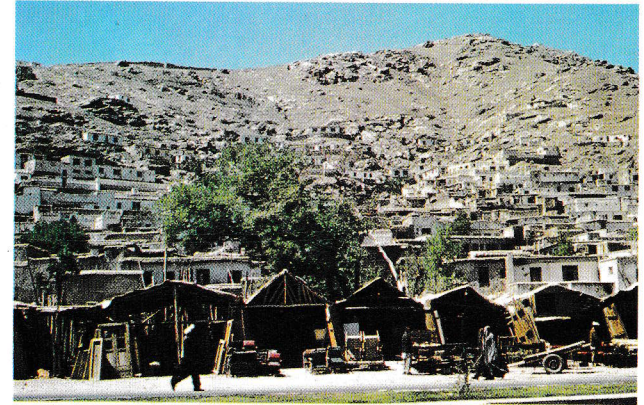


The majestic beauty of nature in Afghanistan combines with traditional ancient cultures



Kabul lies among high mountain massifs topped the year round by snow

A suburb of Kabul



These houses also belong to Kabul

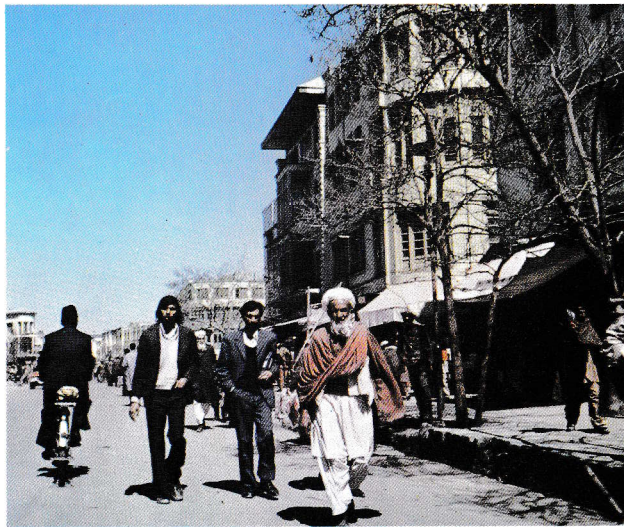
Every day in the streets of Kabul one meets with history and contemporary times





Busy traffic is characteristic of the streets of the capital city

Older Afghans remain faithful to tradition in their way of dress



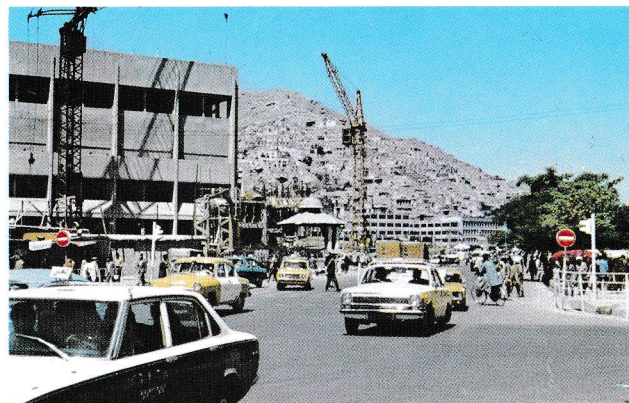
One meets women often in the Kabul bazaar. As prescribed by tradition, most of the older ones wear the veil

Many women have already laid aside their former compulsory apparel — the chadr, but veiled women can still be seen on the streets. The veils of the richer women are beautifully embroidered but the colour of the embroidery must be the same as the colour of the veil





The close source of water enables people to live even in the high mountain valleys, where, for the most part, they raise sheep and goats



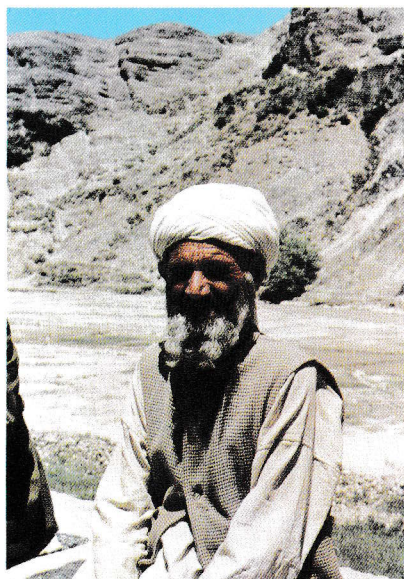
Kabul is a city where many high rise modern apartment houses are built. The photo shows the main post office building before it was completed



Contemporary times also require a modern solution to the traffic problem and so in 1980 the first underpass was constructed in the centre of Kabul



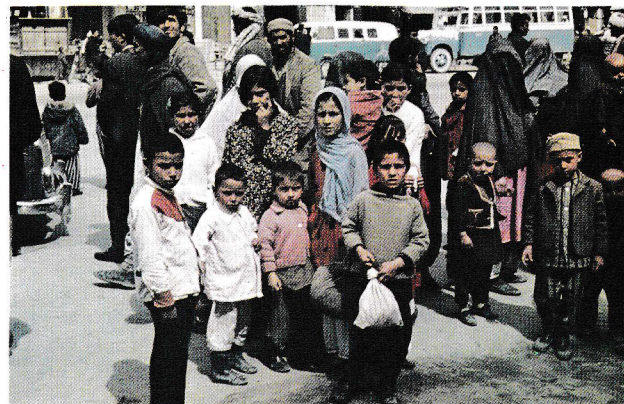
At a shoe stall in Ghazni

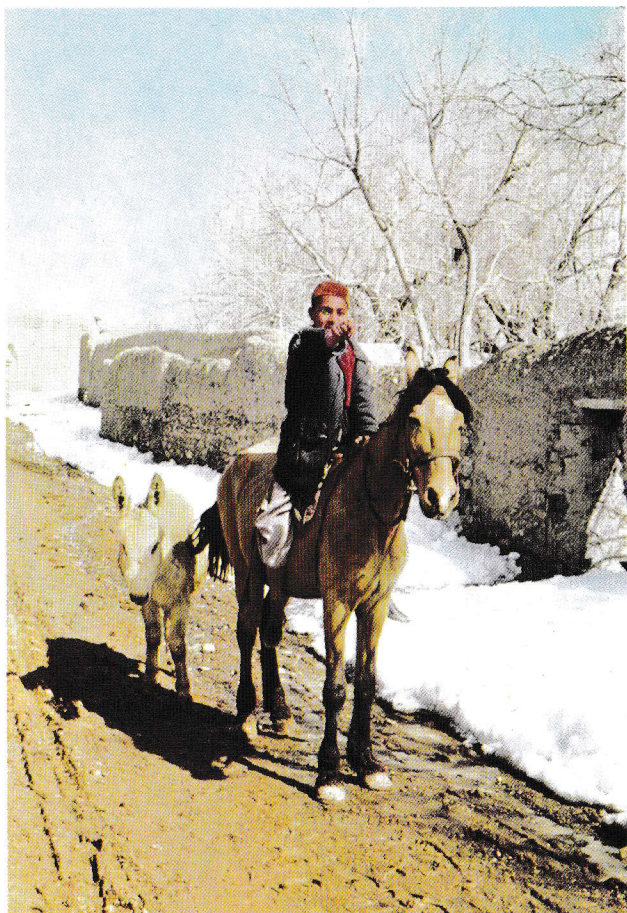


A face furrowed with wrinkles, calloused hands, but a kind heart, a smile and an optimistic look — these belong to the ordinary Afghans

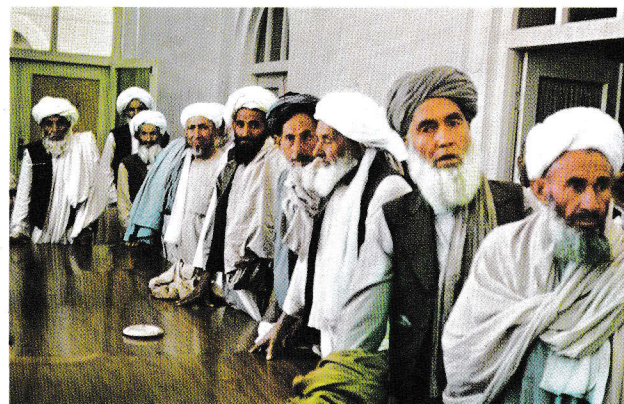


Afghan children for many years have given rather than received, but the revolution has created basic conditions for their development
Children - the future of Afghanistan

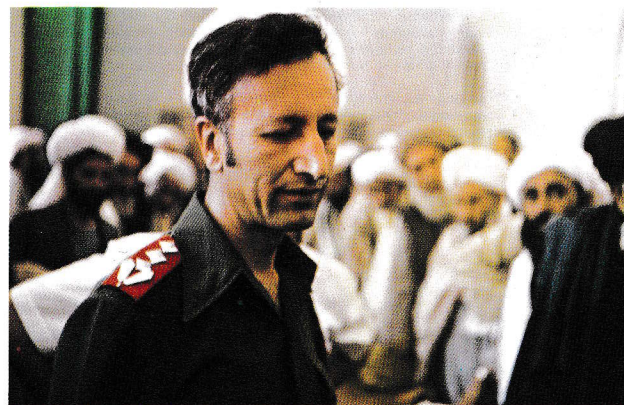




A boy helpfully explains the way



The revolutionary government of Afghanistan fully respects the religious beliefs of all people in the land. The state helps with repairs to mosques. The photo shows one of the frequent meetings of government representatives with mullahs

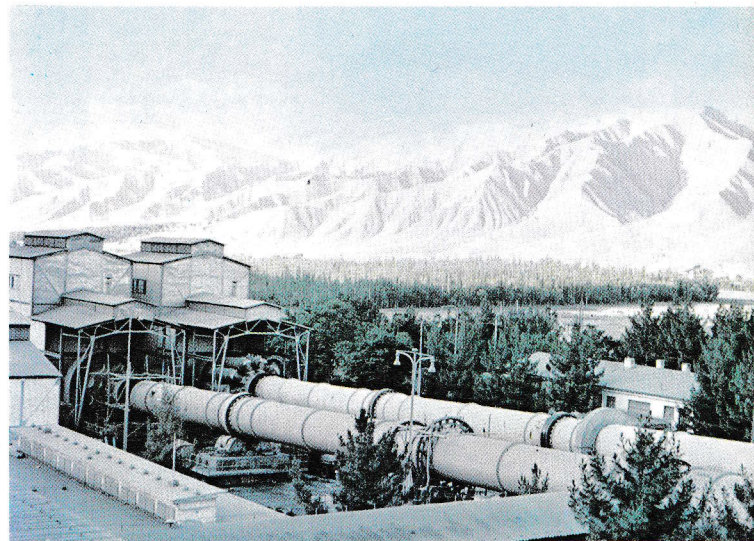


In Kandahar the leader of the southern zone met with religious leaders in the province to discuss questions of mutual cooperation



Counter-revolutionary forces in 1980 and 1981 tried to stop the mining of coal in the northern province of Baghlan not far from Pul-i-Khumri. However, the miners formed militia units to protect their lives and mining equipment

Military units also joined in the protection of the mines in the vicinity of Pul-i-Khumri. The photo shows a soldier standing guard



Czechoslovakia belongs among the biggest foreign trade partners of Afghanistan. Czechoslovak experts and technicians in the beginning of the 1960s participated in the building in the province of Baghlan of a cement works which at the present time is the only supplier of this vital building material

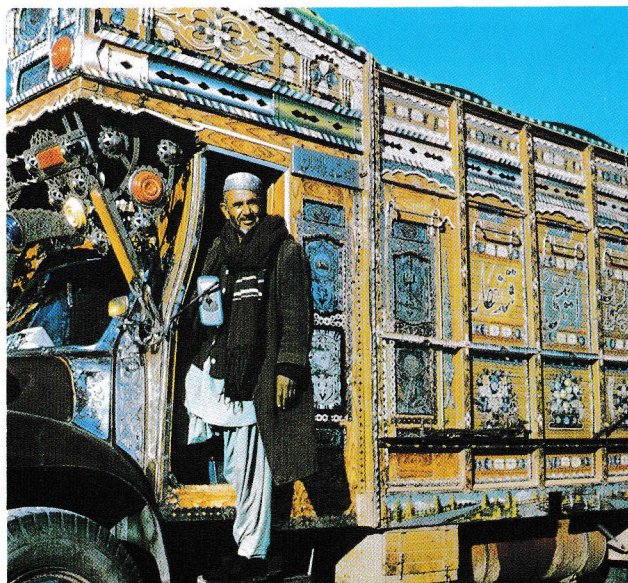
In Afghanistan — a country without railways and navigable rivers — most of the goods are transported by private lorries. The photo shows the loading of cement in Pul-i-Khumri





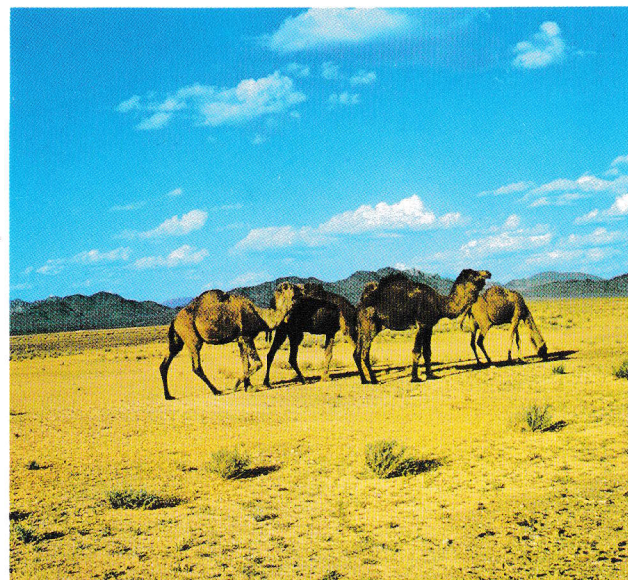
Privately owned lorries are decorated with religious pictures and quotations from the Koran

Traditional ornaments accompany Afghans throughout their life. They even decorate the car in the photo which, in addition, has an ingeniously thought out lighting system



You can still see such a picture in the Afghan countryside

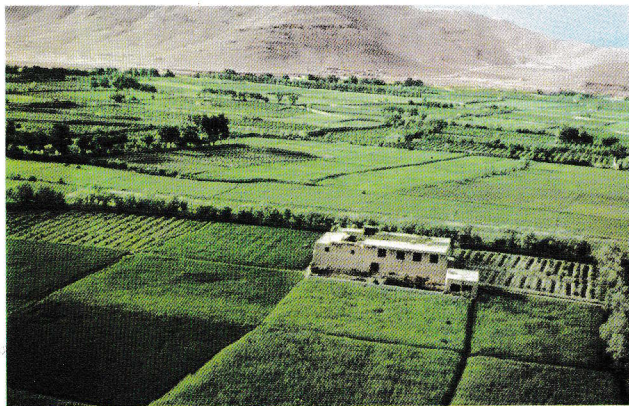
Camels are an inseparable part of the desert between Herat and Kandahar





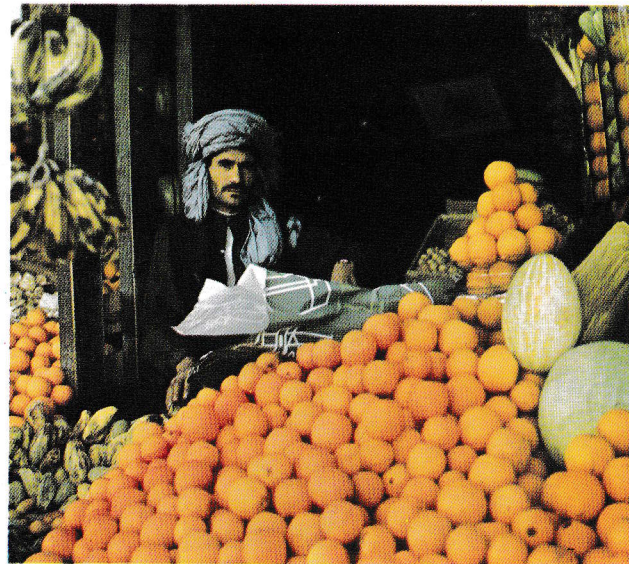
Each piece of land in the mountain plains is carefully tended and even irrigated when possible

In spring the rivers in the valleys provide water to make thousands of little fields green. However, where a system of irrigation canals and deep wells with powerful pumps are available, several harvests can be reaped each year. The photo shows a valley not far from Kabul



A vendor has put up his stall right in the middle of a Kabul street

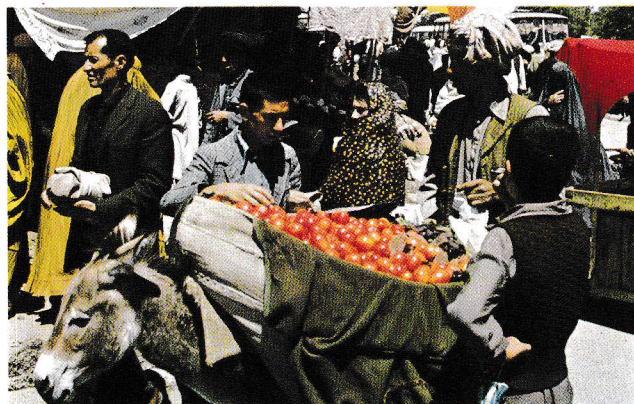
All colours can be seen in the bazaar in Kabul





The selection of fruit is varied all year round — from the cheapest oranges and mandarines, grapes and melons to the anar apple, the mango and the expensive apple

Afghans are known to be good businessmen. The counter displaying their goods is often just the road or the back of a donkey



The wide assortment of goods offered by Afghan vendors is shown at a brightly coloured stand with spices

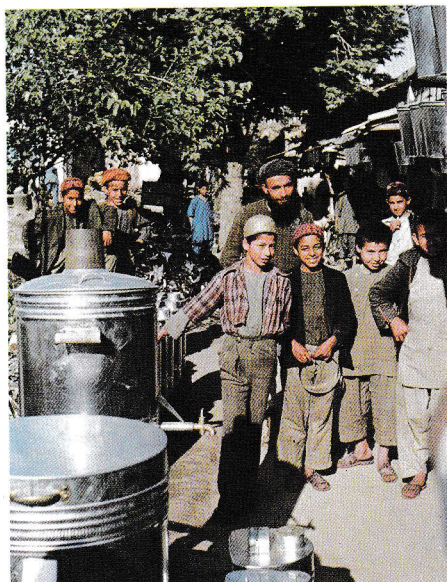
One of the oldest occupations in the country is that of water carrier. (No. 5 and 6)





Water carrier (No. 7 and 8)

Afghans have always had to cope with the lack of drinking water. Even today carrying water to houses at higher locations provides a living to some of them. They carry leather bags which hold as much as forty litres of this precious liquid for distances of several kilometres



At the source of drinking water

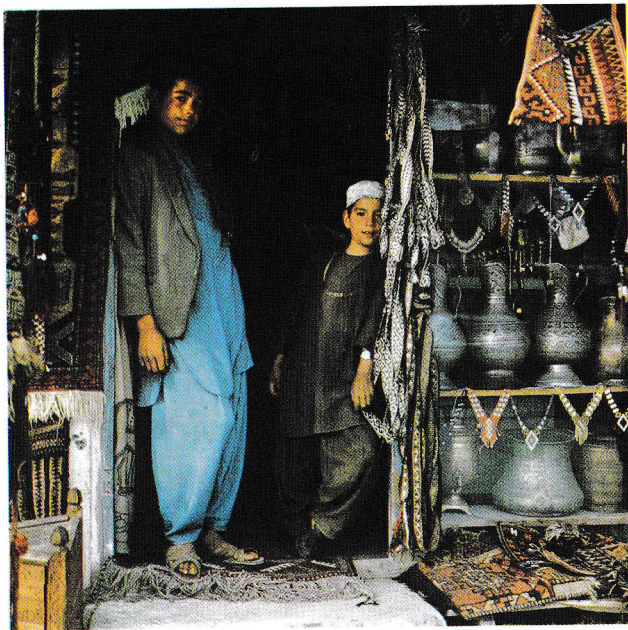
Kabul streets also look like this. A street vendor offers a passerby refreshing lemonade





This is how the vendor offers his goods in Ghazni

Some places between vendors' stalls are used for selling antiques



A typical view of a street of Kabul vendors

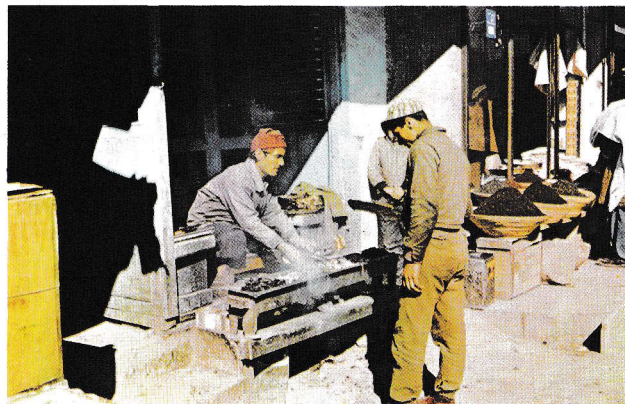
A rich selection of textiles and sewing and other accessories is offered to women





Everything can be sold — side by side the street vendors sell cigarettes, pictures, chewing gum, fruit and even blacksmith's tools

The typical food sold on the streets in Afghanistan is kebab — spiced lamb meat grilled over a charcoal fire, and to go with it a piece of bread and a bowl of hot spices and tea



There are even men who sell medicines on the street (No. 59—60)

It is always interesting to see the assortment offered by Afghan vendors. (No. 36—37)





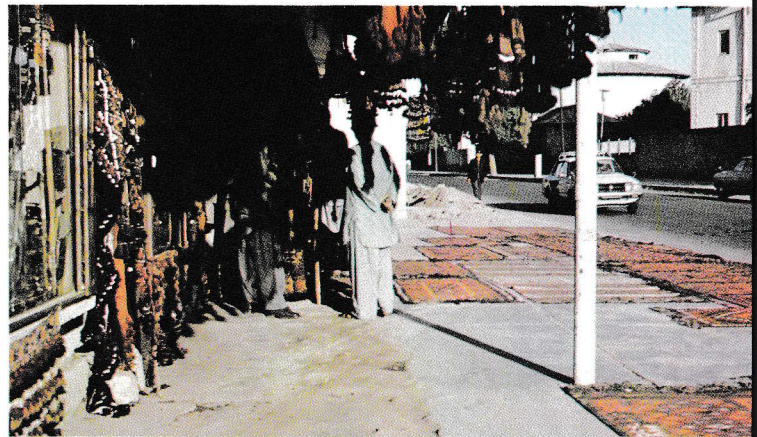
The vendors put up their stalls where the customers are sure to see them. (No. 31—32)

Vivid colours show brightly from the wool vendor's stand. (No. 40—41)



A handloom, plus imagination and skilful hands are sufficient for Afghans to create the most beautiful traditional products

Innumerable little shops offer traditional souvenirs — hammered utensils, historical guns and pistols, beautiful Persian carpets with colourful designs and other typical Oriental goods. (No. 41—42)





Weaving woollen carpets is a traditional craft in this country. One way to make sure that the colours do not fade is to pour water on the carpets and scrub them with brushes. (No. 37—38)

Like shopkeepers, the barber in Ghazni also sets up his stall right on the street



The public scribe is a sight of the older regime which was unable to do away with illiteracy. Since the introduction of school attendance (after the revolution) this way of making a living is gradually disappearing from the streets

A visit to the street scribe





Afghan stone masons are also rather artistic. They not only take orders for paving stones and tombstones, but also for such things as attractive sculptures

